

# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

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## THESIS

**THE AEGEAN DISPUTE  
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE U.S. POLICY**

by

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June 2000

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The Greek-Turkish dispute over the Aegean encompasses several distinct, yet interrelated, factors: 1. Sovereign rights over the Aegean continental shelf; 2. Territorial waters limits within the Aegean claimed by each side; 3. Jurisdiction over airspace zones; 4. Sovereignty over certain or unspecified (*gray areas*) Aegean islands.

The Greek-Turkish dispute threatens peace and stability in the region. Moreover, the tension has disrupted the cohesion of NATO and jeopardizes the ability of the Western alliance to influence events in the Middle East and the Balkans. This thesis maintains that U.S. policy after World War II strongly influenced domestic politics in Greece and Turkey and, consequently, contributed indirectly to the dispute itself. American diplomacy's relative ineffectiveness on this issue and future implications must therefore be considered. Generally, United States and NATO objectives, initiated by the Cold War priorities, transformed during time the regional policies of Greece and Turkey. Furthermore, these priorities created an imbalance in Aegean, and, consequently, Turkish objectives became wider in spectrum.

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Captain, Hellenic Army  
Hellenic Military Academy, 1987

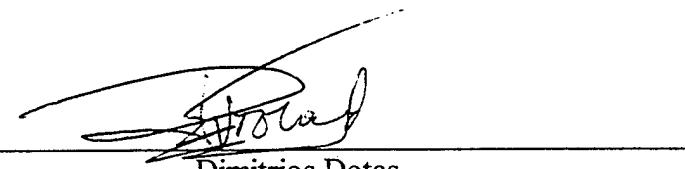
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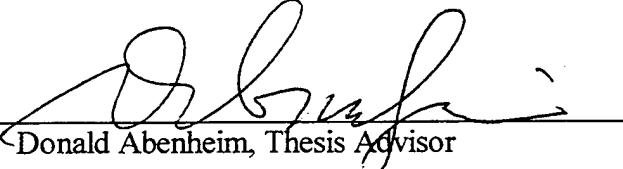
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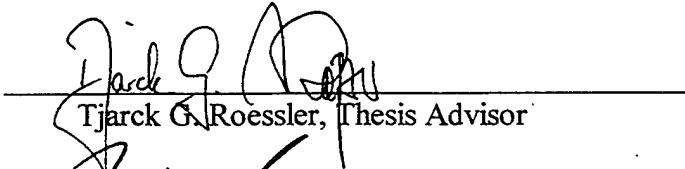


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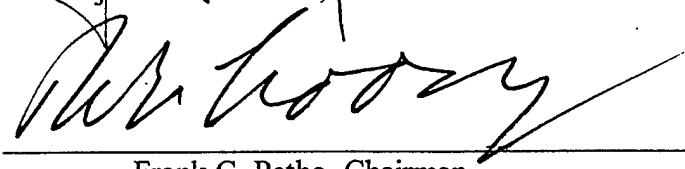
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## ABSTRACT

The Greek-Turkish dispute over the Aegean encompasses several distinct, yet interrelated, factors: 1. Sovereign rights over the Aegean continental shelf; 2. Territorial waters limits within the Aegean claimed by each side; 3. Jurisdiction over airspace zones; 4. Sovereignty over certain or unspecified (*gray areas*) Aegean islands.

The Greek-Turkish dispute threatens peace and stability in the region. Moreover, the tension has disrupted the cohesion of NATO and jeopardizes the ability of the Western alliance to influence events in the Middle East and the Balkans. This thesis maintains that U.S. policy after World War II strongly influenced domestic politics in Greece and Turkey and, consequently, contributed indirectly to the dispute itself. American diplomacy's relative ineffectiveness on this issue and future implications must therefore be considered.

Generally, United States and NATO objectives, initiated by the Cold War priorities, transformed during time the regional policies of Greece and Turkey. Furthermore, these priorities created an imbalance in Aegean, and, consequently, Turkish objectives became wider in spectrum.

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To my daughter Athena, for the missing hours of our playing, because  
“daddy was writing a book.”

*“Gentlemen, I notice that there are always three courses  
(of action) open to an enemy and that he usually takes the fourth”*

Von Moltke the Elder

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. GENERAL

Ever since the abduction of Helen of Troy the Aegean Sea has been an area of military and political confrontation. For long periods conflicts in the area have tended to reflect cultural and religious differences between Europe and Asia, as when Persian fleets and armies descended on the early Greek city-states, or when the Byzantine Empire's fleet fought the Arab one. However, the present dispute between Greece and Turkey is a break with history in that both countries are, however uncertainly, members of the same "European" alliance (NATO). Turkey in particular, forming a bridge between the two continents, has for sixty years sought to resolve its problem of identity by facing westwards. Yet it would be unrealistic to ignore past events and their continuing influence both on popular opinion in the two countries and on Western attitudes towards them. Thus, this thesis devotes some attention to history in analyzing each side's perceptions of the other's intentions.

Ethnic violence between two civilized and cultured peoples is always difficult to understand, all the more so when it happens in Europe. In the case of the Greeks and the Turks, it is tempting to write off the mutual hostility as driven inexorably by history – suggesting that one thousand years later, they are (like Robert Kaplan's other "Balkan ghosts")<sup>1</sup> still dueling over religion, territory, and regional influence. But most people

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<sup>1</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts*, Vintage Books, 1994. In his book, Kaplan contributes regional conflicts in the Balkans to region's history; the "ghosts" of the past are responsible for actions of today.

who know the two modern countries well do not believe the past is any more inescapable for Greece and Turkey than it was for France and Germany after World War II.

However, the persistence of the Greek-Turkish confrontation, whatever its roots, runs counter to the common-sense conviction that, with reason and good will, civilized people in decent economic circumstances can settle their problems peacefully. Greece and Turkey, for their part, are increasingly pluralistic and prosperous –qualities commonly supposed to be sure foundations of lasting peace and stability.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in the United States and Europe, there is a widespread belief that the end of the Cold War makes such hostility anachronistic –that the positive new global and regional circumstances foster the healing of old divisions such as the bilateral Greek-Turkish antagonism. Western mediators approach the problems like sophisticated puzzles: one just has to keep resizing the parts and trading them back and forth until the two sides balance out. Sadly, however, whether because of process or content, it just has not worked that way. In the Aegean, the Greeks and the Turks do not even agree on a procedure to examine the pieces of the puzzle.

Indeed, the prospects for reconciliation between the two communities seem to be receding. Promising starts, such as the 1989 Greek and Turkish prime ministerial meeting (dubbed the *Spirit of Davos*), or, the U.S.-promoted bilateral Madrid Communiqué of 1997, led nowhere. Worse still, there has been a dangerous downward spiral since early 1996. The incidents include Greece's temporary harboring of a Kurdish rebel (Ocalan) in early 1999, which incensed Turks, even though Greece officially refused Ocalan's

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<sup>2</sup> See for example Sylvia Kedoure (ed.), *Turkey: Identity, Democracy, Politics*, Portland: Frank Cass, 1996; C. Woodhouse, *Modern Greece: A Short History*, London: Faber and Faber, 1991.

request for asylum, and apparently forced him to leave the Greek Embassy in Kenya<sup>3</sup>, Turkish questioning of Aegean boundaries and the sovereignty of Greek islands and islets, especially in the aftermath of the Imia (Kardak)<sup>4</sup> 1996 incident, which outraged Greeks; and military confrontation over a 1997 Greek Cypriot order for Russian missiles, even though the deployment was canceled at the end of 1998. Moreover, strongly adverse reaction from the Turkish side to the EU's perceived "slaps in the face"<sup>5</sup> in 1997 severed diplomatic channels: Ankara suspended all political dialogue with Brussels, and Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash declared the end of intercommunal talks<sup>6</sup>.

Inevitably, the failure to bring about reconciliation between the Greeks and the Turks has been costly. Defense expenditures take an exorbitant share of the national budgets in Greece and Turkey; there is little bilateral trade or cultural exchange; and regional development opportunities go begging. From an American perspective, the tensions undermine progress and stability across a wide area of great strategic importance.

But why has reconciliation proven so elusive? What are the central issues of the dispute, the lessons learned, and the new steps that should be considered? The following

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<sup>3</sup> What exactly happened in Kenya, notably the interplay between the Turkish, American and Kenyan governments, remains unclear. As for the Greek handling of the case, a leaked report of the Greek ambassador's statements to government investigators has the ring of truth. See Dina Kyriakidou, "New Report Rekindles Ocalan Controversy in Greece" (*Reuters*, Athens, 07 March 1999). The Greek language text of the leaked report was published in the *TA NEA* [newspaper] of March 6.

<sup>4</sup> Geographical locations will referred with their Greek names first and the Turkish ones (if there are different) following in parentheses.

<sup>5</sup> "Yilmaz said his government would sever all political contacts with the EU. He told reporters in Ankara, 'We will have no political dialogue with the [European] Union anymore.'" (Quoted from the article of *Associated Press* "EU: Turkey Excluded from Membership Talks," 18 December 1998).

<sup>6</sup> After President Clinton's visit to Greece and Turkey (November 1999) the intercommunal talks have been resumed between the two Cypriot leaders in New York (December 03, 1999), and the mid-December's 1999 Helsinki Summit of EU determined Turkey's accession.

sections first consider the resurgence of Greek-Turkish ethnic violence since the 1950s and the evolution of the dispute, and why the end of the Cold War has brought little change despite the positive new regional opportunities. This thesis then examines the central unresolved issues between the parties and the persistent inability over the same period to successfully institute a stable environment. Indeed, the thesis concludes that U.S. policy after World War II strongly influenced domestic politics in Greece and Turkey and, consequently, contributed indirectly to the dispute itself. American diplomacy's relative ineffectiveness on this issue and future implications must therefore be considered. The role of Western institutions, namely NATO and the EU, is also examined.

## **B. PURPOSE-SIGNIFICANCE-METHODOLOGY-HYPOTHESIS OF THE THESIS**

### **1. Purpose**

This thesis will examine the reasons for the Greek-Turkish rivalry related to the Aegean Sea, focusing on the role of the United States. The questions to be answered are:

- What was the impact of the U.S. policy on the relationship between Greece and Turkey?
- Has the U.S. policy exacerbated the issues of the dispute?
- What are the future implications for the U.S. policy?

## 2. Significance

The importance of the topics involved in this thesis is obvious for various reasons. The Greek-Turkish dispute related to the Aegean Sea threatens peace and stability in the region. Moreover, the tension has disrupted the cohesion of NATO and jeopardizes the ability of the Western alliance to influence events in the Middle East and the Balkans –a sensitive area gained special importance after Yugoslavia's wars and Kosovo's campaign. For example, "...Turkey has suggested in the past that it might stall the ratification of NATO enlargement if it fails to receive more favorable treatment from the EU."<sup>7</sup> Also, "...awkward relations between Greece and Turkey within NATO have continued, affecting Aegean exercises, infrastructure funding and troop assignment."<sup>7</sup>

However, this importance is best demonstrated with the official White House statements<sup>8</sup> for the region:

**The Balkans and Southeastern Europe:** The United States has an *abiding interest in peace in this region because continued instability there threatens European security.*

**Cyprus and the Aegean:** Tensions on Cyprus, *Greek-Turkish disagreements in the Aegean* and Turkey's relationship with the EU have *serious implications for regional stability and the evolution of European political and security structures.* Our goals are to *stabilize the region by reducing long-standing Greek-Turkish tensions* and pursuing a comprehensive settlement on Cyprus. [Emphasis added].

Therefore, since stability in this area is among the U.S. policy's priorities, a research on

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<sup>7</sup> "Instability in the Eastern Mediterranean- Other Destabilizing Factors," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Special Report No 17, March 1998, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> "A National Security Strategy for a New Century", *White House*, January 2000. The quoted phrases are under the "Europe and Eurasia" and "Enhancing Security" section and sub-section respectively. [Available Online: <http://www.pub.whitehouse.gov/uri-res/I2R?urn:pdi://oma.eop.gov.us/2000/1/7/1.text.1>].

how this policy may affect the stability of the whole context should be considered critical.

### **3. Methodology-Hypothesis**

This thesis explores the central aspects of one case –the Aegean dispute. It is a single case study and the depended variable is the dispute itself. Though there are many issues involved in the dispute, the dispute will be evaluated as a whole, since it is not the scope of this thesis to provide an analytical framework of these parts, neither to present the numerous arguments and counter-arguments supported from both sides –that would be impossible. However, a description to some degree on the related topics and the evolution of the dispute over time is considered mandatory in providing an understandable background to the reader.

The independent variables are the factors that are posited hereof having the most significant impact on influencing the development of the dispute:

- The historical background
- The security perceptions of Greece and Turkey
- The role of United States
- The role of institutions, namely the NATO and the EU.

Finally, the hypothesis to be proven and the main argument of this thesis is that U.S. policy's priorities during the Cold War exacerbated the issues of the dispute –although did not create the dispute itself. Insensitive to local tensions because of its focus on the Soviet bloc, the United States created a marked imbalance of power in the Aegean that threatened the regional stability and affected those countries policies' goals in the long

run. Moreover, the thesis will support that in the post-Cold War period, United States more or less continues the same policy. It also recommends guidelines for the U.S. policy for the establishment of a sustainable stability in the region.

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## II. DIMENSIONS OF THE DISPUTE

The Greek-Turkish dispute over the Aegean encompasses several distinct, yet interrelated, factors:

- Sovereign rights over the Aegean continental shelf.
- The extent of territorial waters limits within the Aegean claimed by each country.
- Jurisdiction over airspace control zones in the Aegean area.
- More recently and alarmingly, the question of sovereignty over certain Aegean islands.

Moreover, other questions are intimately involved and must be considered in connection with the Aegean dispute. These questions include concerns over the remilitarization in the region; the problem of minorities –the Greek Orthodox minority in Istanbul and on the islands of Imbros (Gökçeada) and Tenedos (Bozcaada), and the Muslim minority in Western Thrace; and –overshadowing all else– the Cyprus question. Although most of these issues and the dispute itself have been around for decades, events in recent years have re-emphasized the Aegean's potential as a catalyst for military conflict. For example, the two sides' 1996 confrontation over the ownership of Imia (Kardak), as mentioned above, led to vitriolic exchanges between Athens and Ankara, and a military build-up around the disputed islands. The confrontation forced the United States to immediately intervene in order to prevent further escalation and to neutralize the real possibility of the two neighbors sliding towards open war. These events vividly demonstrate the Aegean dispute's catastrophically explosive potential.

## A. CONTINENTAL SHELF

In essence, the Turkish position is that the Aegean should be shared equally between the two parties, with Greek islands that lie east of the median line between the two mainland coasts being restricted to the six nm of seabed under their territorial waters and, thus, encircled. Greece, unsurprisingly, rejects this view and argues that all its islands should be accorded full maritime jurisdictional rights, thus severely restricting Turkey's share of the Aegean continental shelf and potential exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

The dispute over continental shelf rights emerged in 1973 when Turkey was awarded exploration rights in the eastern Aegean and published a map<sup>9</sup> indicating the limits of its continental shelf rights as being to the west of Greece's easternmost islands. The area thus designated overlapped with the area of the continental shelf claimed by Greece, and in some cases the Turkish awards were in areas where Greece had already granted licenses to foreign companies. Naturally Greece protested, and the Turkish response (on 28 February 1974) was to propose negotiations, accepted by Greece on 25 May "in accordance with international law as codified in the Geneva Convention" — a step described by the Turkish Prime Minister Ecevit as a "positive development."<sup>10</sup> Three days later, however, Turkey announced that a survey ship, the *Candarli*, was to make magneto-metric studies in the Aegean in preparation for oil drilling. The area of the survey was to be "in the Turkish continental shelf." The *Candarli* entered the Aegean on 29 May, accompanied by no less than thirty-two warships, and spent six days cruising

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<sup>9</sup> *Turkish Official Gazette*, 1 November 1973.

along the western limits of the Turkish claim in 1974. In the ensuing tense situation Greece sent a new protest, which Turkey rejected. A month later Turkey granted more exploration licenses, extending further west and south and including the waters around all the Dodecanese Islands.<sup>11</sup>

At this point the continental shelf dispute was overtaken by a sequence of outside events: the Samson coup in Cyprus (July 15), the first Turkish invasion (July 20), the fall of the Greek military junta with the return of Karamanlis (July 23), the Geneva talks negotiation to settle the Cyprus case, and finally the second Turkish invasion in August 1974 while the Geneva talks still were ongoing. The Turkish invasion led, as noted earlier, eventually to the occupation of thirty-seven per cent of Cyprus territory and put Turkey in a position of strength, since it had the possibility of trading concessions in Cyprus against concessions in the Aegean. Also, the Cyprus invasion introduced a new element—the dispute over air traffic control zones.

In 1976 the *Sizmik 1* made another voyage and spent three days surveying the Greek-claimed continental shelf west of Lesbos. The Greek Government duly appealed to the UN Security Council and started proceedings against Turkey before the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The Security Council did not apportion blame for the dispute, instead calling on the parties to strive to reduce tension in the area and seek a negotiated solution, while the ICJ decided in January 1979 that it lacked the jurisdiction to rule in the Aegean Sea Continental Shelf case. However, tensions related to hydrocarbon exploration resurfaced in March 1987, when Turkey once again announced that another

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<sup>10</sup> Andrew Wilson, *The Aegean Dispute*, Adelphi Paper No. 155, London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1979, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> G. Papademetriou, *The Differences over the Aegean Continental Shelf*, Athens: Papazeses, 1975, p. 9.

survey ship, the *Sizmik 2*, was going to make oil searches over the disputed continental shelf. This time Greece's reaction was more vigorous, since Prime Minister Papandreu declared this action a *casus belli*, while he put the Greek armed forces on a high-alert status. Through U.S. and NATO mediation<sup>12</sup>, Turkey canceled the survey. Events had once again necessitated diplomacy at the highest level simply to diffuse the military situation, with no effort to resolve the technical arguments. The dispute therefore remains unresolved and now represents an underlying irritant in bilateral relations.

## B. TERRITORIAL WATERS

Both Greece and Turkey currently claim six nautical miles (nm) of territorial seas in the Aegean. However, on 31 May 1995 the Greek Parliament ratified the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which includes the provision that states have the right to a territorial sea of up to twelve nm. Turkey, which is not a signatory of the Convention, maintains that twelve nm represents the maximum the territorial sea can be extended to and that this maximum is inappropriate in a semi-enclosed sea such as the Aegean. Ankara maintains that if Greece extended its territorial sea to twelve nm unilaterally, this would represent a *casus belli* for Turkey. For example, in 1997 the commander of the Turkish naval forces, Admiral Govan Erkaya, indicated that if Greece made such a move, "Turkey would seriously consider seizing some of the Greek islands close to the Turkish mainland."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Finally Britain's Lord Carrington, then NATO's Secretary General, provided mediation in the crisis. *Facts On File News Services*, April 03 1987 [Available Online: <http://www.2facts.com/stories/index/1987009160.asp>]

<sup>13</sup> *Jumhuriyet*, June 12 1997 and *TA NEA*, June 13 1997.

The Turkish argument centers on the fact that even with the current six nm territorial sea claims, Greece, with more than 2,300 islands in the Aegean (many of which lie close to the Turkish mainland), is accorded thirty-five per cent of the Aegean as its territorial sea while Turkey is allotted only nine per cent<sup>14</sup>. If both Greece and Turkey claimed a twelve nm territorial sea, not only would the proportion of the Aegean beyond territorial waters be dramatically cut from fifty-six per cent to twenty-six per cent but also the Greek share of the Aegean as territorial sea would leap to sixty-three per cent. Turkey's share, meanwhile, would only rise to a meager eleven per cent<sup>15</sup> (Figure 1). Such an act would, according to Ankara, turn the Aegean into little more than a Greek lake.

From a Turkish perspective such a scenario is inequitable and unacceptable as all shipping to and from Turkey's Aegean ports and, indeed, that transiting the Turkish straits to and from the Black Sea would be obliged to pass through Greek territorial waters. Even in the light of the 1997 Madrid Communiqué, Turkey was anxious to stress that a twelve nm extension would still be interpreted as a Greek declaration of war<sup>16</sup>. For its part, Athens has emphasized that navigation rights, covered by the right of innocent passage laid down in the 1982 UN Convention, clearly are not threatened by a future extension of territorial waters to twelve nm. Furthermore, Greece points out that Turkey itself has extended its territorial seas to twelve nm off its Black Sea and Mediterranean

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<sup>14</sup> Andrew Wilson, *The Aegean Dispute*, Adelphi Paper No. 155, London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1979, p. 28.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>16</sup> "Turkey has reacted to a statement by Greek Prime Minister Kostas Simitis who signed the Madrid accord between Turkey and Greece, in which he says that Greece reserved its right to extend its territorial waters to 12 miles. The Turkish Foreign Ministry has stressed that Greek insistence on a 12 mile limit would annul the accord while it remains a *casus belli*." (*Jumhuriyet*, 11 July 1997).

coasts. Nevertheless, in the face of such strong Turkish opposition, Athens has, as yet, not formally extended its territorial seas in the Aegean and has only reserved the right to do so in the future.

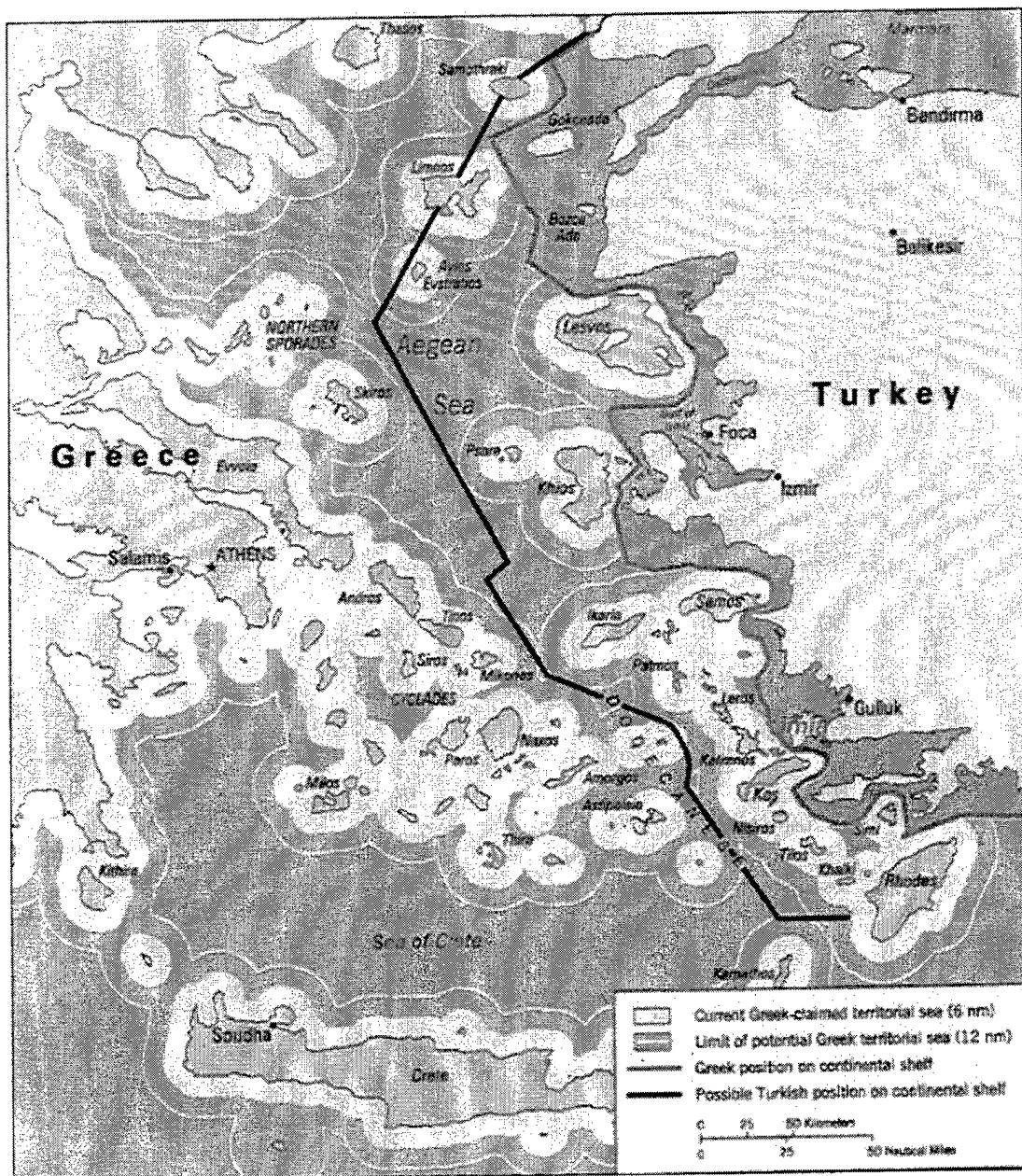


Figure 1. Aegean Sea: Territorial Water and Continental Shelf (Source: CLA, Photo Archives).

### C. AIR SPACE

The issue of airspace jurisdiction is linked with that of continental shelf rights in that both relate to Turkey's desire to extend its jurisdiction to the Aegean Sea's median line and Greece's resistance to these attempts. As early as 1931 Greece claimed a ten nm zone along its coasts for the control and policing of air navigation<sup>17</sup>. Moreover, in 1952 the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), in which both countries participate, ruled that except for a narrow strip of national airspace along the Turkish coast, responsibility for Aegean airspace should fall to the Athens Flight Information Region (FIR)<sup>18</sup>. To place the FIR boundary further to the west would oblige Greek aircraft to pass through a Turkish control zone on flights to the Greek islands. To this extent, the arrangement was consistent with geography, and it seems to have worked well for twenty-two years. But in the tension following the Turkish invasion of Cyprus it broke down.

On 4 August 1974, in the middle of the Cyprus crisis, Turkey demanded that all aircraft approaching Turkish airspace report their position and flight plan on reaching the Aegean median line<sup>19</sup>. Greece rejected this unilateral action on the grounds that it contravened the ICAO decision (to which both countries had been party) and because the choice of a median line in Greek eyes had a political character, since the Turkish-proposed "report line" approximated to the Western limit of Turkish claims to the continental shelf. Therefore, on 13 September 1974, Greece declared the Aegean air

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<sup>17</sup> *Presidential Directive of 18 September 1931*, published on the *Governmental Paper Sheet A' 325/1931*.

<sup>18</sup> *First ICAO Conference* under the *Third Regional Communiqué of Paris*, 1952. (Voted unanimously by all members, among them Turkey).

<sup>19</sup> *Turkish NOTAM 714* [NOTAM: Notice To Airmen and Mariners].

routes to Turkey to be unsafe because of the threat of conflicting orders<sup>20</sup>. As Greece no longer accepted responsibility for safety measures or guaranteed traffic information, the ICAO suspended all international airline routes flying over the Aegean. These conflicting notices were withdrawn in 1980, when Turkey recalled its demand, probably as a result of the badly damaged Turkish tourism due to the flight restrictions<sup>21</sup>. Immediately after this Greece recalled its notification as well.

However, to this day Turkey refuses to submit flight plans for its military aircraft to Athens. This results in Greek aircraft regularly being scrambled to intercept and identify Turkish military flights over the Aegean, leading to numerous confrontations<sup>22</sup>, protests and counter-protests. This type of incident was recently exemplified in October 1997 by the visit of the Greek Minister of Defense to Cyprus. The ministerial C-130 Hercules was "buzzed by Turkish F-16s both en route to and when returning from Cyprus, provoking Greek accusations of Turkish trouble-making and causing the UN Secretary General to express concern over rising tension between Greek and Turkish forces operating in the Aegean theatre."<sup>23</sup> More important of course than the FIR boundary is the issue of the national airspace territory. Greece has claimed a ten nm national airspace since 1931; and until 1975, for a forty-four year period, Turkey never challenged it. Indeed, Turkey, as well as all NATO countries, did not object to –thus, practically accepted the ten nm airspace until the late 1974, since there is absence of any

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<sup>20</sup> Greek NOTAM 1157.

<sup>21</sup> "Greece: Aegean Air Dispute Ended," *The Times*, 29 February 1980.

<sup>22</sup> These confrontations not always have a happy end; occasionally accidents and crashes occur. (See for example, "Turkish Plane Crashes After Pursuit," *Euronews*, 23 February 1995).

<sup>23</sup> "Instability in the Eastern Mediterranean," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Special Report No 17, March 1998, p. 8.

kind of protest on this issue; moreover, Turkish NOTAM were fully complied with this limit.<sup>24</sup> Since 1975, however, Turkey has recognized only a six nm Greek airspace, and Turkish warplanes regularly enter the disputed airspace on an ever-increasing basis.

#### **D. IMIA (KARDAK) CASE – SOVEREIGNTY OVER ISLANDS**

The dispute over the sovereignty of Aegean islands is, perhaps, the most explosive issue of the whole spectrum of Aegean disputes. The question of the sovereignty is a relatively recent issue, since it first appeared on the disputes agenda in early 1996 with the Imia (Kardak) incident.

Specifically<sup>25</sup>, this incident began when a Turkish vessel ran into a reef near the islet of Imia (Kardak) on 26 December 1995 and refused to be tugged by Greek boats, insisting that this was Turkish territory. While a few days later in Ankara Turkish diplomats officially supported this view, the mayor of nearby Kalymnos decided to plant a Greek flag on the islet. A team of *Hurriyet* (a popular Turkish newspaper) journalists subsequently removed the flag in January 1996, and a Turkish flag was hoisted on the rocky islet, with the event covered by the Turkish media. Of course, tensions grew. Greece sent some Greek soldiers to replace the Greek flag on the islet and Turkey followed by sending its own troops to occupy another nearby rock (Small Imia). As a chain reaction, both sides deployed masses of forces and mobilized to the highest alert-

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<sup>24</sup> For example, for the exercise *DENIZ KURDU 2/74* “all aircraft are required to submit flight plans in accordance with ICAO Annex Two Para 3-3.1.1.2.1 (D)” and “No aircraft is to approach to Hellenic territory nearer than ten nautical miles.” (Turkish *NOTAM* 836, section 3a,b).

<sup>25</sup> The following description of the crisis is based on “The Imia/Kardak Rocks Flag-Race,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, 1 March 1998, pp. 9-13, and Michael R. Hickock, *Falling Toward War in the Aegean: A Case Study of the Imia/Kardak Affair*, Air War College: Department of Future Conflict Studies, 1998.

status. Thus the incident led to an escalation that added another yet negative item in the already burdened agenda of Greek-Turkish relations. Was the Turkish move designed to bring the Greeks to the negotiating table over all the Aegean claims raised by Turkey, or it was just an opportunity to allow then Prime Minister Ciller a way out of her political impasse<sup>26</sup>? In 1995 *casus belli* threats became the Turkish Prime Minister's favorite expression<sup>27</sup> when addressing relations with Greece.

Moreover, during the planning of NATO exercise "DYNAMIC MIX 1996" in Naples (Italy) to take place in the area of Crete, the representative of the Turkish General Staff submitted a statement (dated 30 May 1996), according to which Turkey opposed the inclusion of the Greek island of Gavdos (situated southwest of Crete) in the exercise "due to its disputed status of property."<sup>28</sup> The Turkish representative also suggested that NATO officials should refrain from becoming involved in what he termed as a Greek-Turkish dispute. Senior officials of the Turkish Government, including Prime Minister Yilmaz himself, endorsed the claim in the following days<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> There were severe accusations of corruption against Ciller at that time; on April 25 1996 the Turkish Parliament voted to investigate allegations of corruption during her years in power (*New York Times*, 25 April 1996). Also, many articles worldwide described the unstable political situation in Turkey at that time:

- "New Corruption Claims Against Ciller Threaten Coalition." (*Agence France-Presse*, 14 May 1996).
- "Once-Acclaimed Turk Fights For Her Political Life." (*The Washington Post*, 07 June 1996).
- "Chronology Of Turkey's Political Crisis." (*Associated Press*, 28 June 1996).

<sup>27</sup> As Patricia Carley points out, "...Prime Minister Tansou Ciller used *casus belli* seven times in her statements over a period of only twelve days; the term is simply overplayed." (From Bancheli, Couloumbis, and Carley, *Greek-Turkish Relations and U.S. Foreign Policy: Cyprus, the Aegean, and Regional Stability*, [Washington, U.S. Institute of Peace, 1997], p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Specifically, Captain (TUN) Huseyin Ciftci, then Turkish representative in NATO, made this written statement. Source: Hellenic Ministry of Defense, Document Archives, *NATO Conference Records*, June 1996.

<sup>29</sup> "Instability in the Eastern Mediterranean," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Special Report No 17, March 1998, p. 9.

On the one hand, it seems peculiar that seventy-three years after the signing of the Lausanne Peace Treaty, Prime Minister Yilmaz referred to unspecified islets of the Aegean and questioned Greece's sovereignty over the island of Gavdos, the legal status of which was defined in 1913, by the Treaty of London<sup>30</sup>. On the other hand, according to Greek perceptions, Turkey is forever burdening the agenda with new claims so that if bilateral negotiations occur then will only concern Turkish demands<sup>31</sup>. Of course this strategy precludes any constructive discussion and inches towards armed conflict with each passing incident.

Nevertheless, the Greek perception of this incident is that the choice of Gavdos was not unintentional: By disputing the sovereignty of an island so remote from the Turkish coasts, Ankara's clear message to Athens was that everything was at stake. Furthermore, Greek sources have reported that a Turkish Military Academy textbook identifies islands in the eastern Aegean, including the Dodecanese group, as being situated on Turkey's continental shelf and therefore justifying a Turkish claim to them<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Specifically, in article 4 of the Treaty of London (signed on 30 May 1913), Crete and all its surrounding islands and islets, including Gavdos, were given to Greece.

<sup>31</sup> Greek officials argue that this pattern has become predictable: "Every so many years since 1973, a new item is forcefully introduced in the Greek-Turkish agenda, followed by invitations to bilateral negotiations. In 1973 Turkey refused to accept that Greek islands are entitled to a continental shelf, in 1974 the territorial integrity of Cyprus was violated and the island was divided in two. The same year the Turkish aviation authorities challenged the 1952 ICAO decision, according to which, for air-traffic control purposes, most of the Aegean airspace was considered part of the Athens Flight Information Region (FIR). At the same time the violation of Greece's ten-mile air space (established in 1931) began in earnest by Turkish aircraft and this practice continues to this day. Fighters traversing Greek islands off the coast of Turkey have become a routine. In 1978 Turkey refused to abide by the 1964 NATO decision that the operational responsibility of most Aegean airspace was assigned to Greece. Far from considering the Aegean a Greek sea (since much of it consists of international waters and air space) the above arrangements were based on the rationale that between Greece and Turkey flights must go over the Greek islands." (To *Vima*, interview of Foreign Minister T. Pagkalos, 22 March 1998). [From Greek text].

<sup>32</sup> On 7 August 1996 the Turkish daily *Jumhuriyet*, printed excerpts of a Turkish military academy report, according to which any Aegean island under six miles from the Turkish coast "by law belongs to Turkey, a successor of the Ottoman empire" and "Turkey still retains sovereignty over the islands which were not given to Greece under article 12 of the 1923 Lausanne Treaty." Greece is accused of allegedly "claiming all

Obviously, any serious Turkish challenge to Greek sovereignty over islands in the Aegean, particularly inhabited islands, would precipitate a furious reaction from Athens and almost inevitably lead to conflict –as illustrated by the uproar over the desolate Imia (Kardak) rocks.

## **F. MINOR DISPUTES**

### **1. Demilitarization of the Islands**

Among the most persistent Turkish demands in the Aegean is the demilitarization of the Greek islands of Samothrace, Lemnos, Lesbos, Chios, Samos and the Dodecanese. Turkey invokes the relevant provisions of the Lausanne Treaty and Convention (1923) as well as the Paris Treaty (1947), while Greece argues that Samothrace and Lemnos were relieved of their demilitarized status through the Montreux Convention of 1936 and that the other islands were fortified after the establishment of the Turkish Fourth Army based in Izmir. In contrast, Ankara views the Fourth Army as a protective shield against attack from fortified Greek islands just a few hundred meters from the Turkish mainland. Furthermore, the Turks argue that the militarization of the island took place first and that it justified the formation of this army. According to estimates<sup>33</sup>, the Fourth Army has a peacetime force of 110,000 combat personnel and is equipped with landing craft and an amphibious capability that makes it the largest non-oceangoing landing force of the world (110 ships). Nevertheless, whether the Turkish Fourth Army establishment preceded the

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of the Aegean islands that are not mentioned in the Lausanne Treaty and the 1947 treaty of Paris" which settled the sovereignty over the Dodecanese islands. [To Vima, 18 August 1996].

<sup>33</sup> "Tension Ride High in the Aegean," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, March 1996, p. 120.

militarization of the islands or vice versa, and however legitimate or not are the interpretations of the Treaties and Conventions given by each country, Greece has two pragmatically sound arguments on its side:

- The legitimate right to defend under any circumstances its sovereignty<sup>34</sup>.
- The obviously defensive status of the islands' militarization itself, in contrast with the unhidden offensive character of the Turkish Fourth Army<sup>35</sup>.

## 2. Minorities

Another issue with explosive potential, thus, it can be used as a *casus belli* by either side on short notice, but which has not risen officially in bilateral negotiations, is

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<sup>34</sup> The militarization of the islands took place only after the Turkish invasion in Cyprus in 1974, undoubtedly as an act of fear of another possible Turkish invasion resulting from the NATO's inaction in Cyprus occupation. Greece contends that demilitarization of the islands cannot deprive it of its natural right to defend the islands if their security is threatened, and obviously Greece under the whole context of Cyprus' invasion felt this way. Surprisingly, this view received support much earlier than 1974-1975; in a secret telegram sent to the U.S. Embassy in Athens in 1948 by the then Secretary of State Gen. Marshall, he expressed the view that the demilitarization of the Dodecanese "did not extend to the cases of the maintenance of public order and of the defense of Greek frontiers." (*State Department Declassified Documents*, 1974). [Available Online: <http://www.ddrs.psmedia.com>].

<sup>35</sup> As early from 1975, Turkish officials revealed the offensive character of their policy toward the Aegean islands many times:

- Suleyman Demirel, Turkish Prime Minister (*Paris Match*, 5 July 1975); "Till recently the islands of the Aegean belonged to whoever possessed Anatolia."
- Mr. Turkes, Turkish Vice-Premier (*Devlet*, 30 March 1976); "The group of islands situated near the Turkish coasts, including the Dodecanese, must belong to Turkey. Among these we cite Samothrace, Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Kos, Rhodes and all others, small or large within a distance of 50 km."
- Gen. Sunalp, Commander of the Turkish Fourth Army (*Politika*, 19 August 1976): "The Army of the Aegean has a striking capability very important to us. It now disposes of a force of 123,000 men and every Aegean island is within our range."

Moreover, "Turkey's 4<sup>th</sup> Army, the so-called 'Army of the Aegean,' is not assigned to NATO; the presence of such a substantial force with amphibious capabilities in close proximity to Greece's outermost islands has proved a cause of great concern to Athens. It has also provided a rationale for Greece to reinforce its forces on those islands as a first line of defense against Turkish attack." [Source: "Instability in the Eastern Mediterranean," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Special Report No 17, March 1998, p. 8].

the treatment of minorities. The minorities' issue strikes sensitive chords in both countries and appears frequently in the Greek and Turkish media<sup>36</sup>.

Turkey's concerns focus on the status, rights, and privileges of Turkish-speaking Muslims (numbering about 120,000), primarily located in the region of western Trace. Turkish media frequently complain that Greek legislation discriminates against Turkish-speaking landowners, making it very difficult for them to acquire and hold onto property while extremely favorable incentives to their Greek-speaking and Greek Orthodox counterparts.

Greece denies these charges indicating that Greek Muslims elect at least two members in Greece's House of Representatives and that since the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne (which provided for the balanced protection of minorities in both countries), the size of the Turkish-speaking community has increased from 100,000 to 120,000. In contrast, Greece points out that the Greek Orthodox minority of over 150,000 in Istanbul has been reduced to the current low level of less than 2,500 as a result of systematic measures of economic discrimination, threats, and generally ill treatment by the Turkish authorities. Greece also protests against the total elimination of the Greek populations on the islands of Imbros (Gockeada) and Tenedos (Bozcadada) as a result of years of blunt and oppressive Turkish administration. Moreover, Greece's membership to the EU insures that legislation on the minorities' issues is fully complied with EU's standards and their rights are strictly guaranteed.

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<sup>36</sup> Official views and data on this issue can be found on the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of both countries [Available Online: <http://www.mfa.gr/> (Greece), <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/> (Turkey)].

### III. EVOLUTION OF THE DISPUTE

#### A. BALKAN WARS – WORLD WAR II<sup>37</sup>

Early in this century, through the Balkan wars of 1912-1913 Greece expanded by liberating the north, including its second largest city, Thessaloniki, and the islands of the Eastern Aegean. During this time Greece was aimed at territories under Ottoman rule inhabited by Greek Orthodox Christians. Thus, beginning in the early 1880s the notion grew for a partial revival under Greek rule of the Byzantine Empire, known as *The Great Idea*. The *Great Idea* became a national obsession, reaching a climax after the defeat of Turkey in World War I. In 1920 Greek troops landed in the -then Smyrna- Izmir region of Asia Minor to enforce a mandate given to Greece by the Treaty of Sevres to occupy the areas of western Anatolia, which were then mainly Greek. Under this treaty, this region's population and their of -then Constantinople- Istanbul were to decide in a referendum after five years whether to become part of Greece or remain with Turkey.

However, this plan was upset in 1920 by the successful revolt of Mustafa Kemal (later Ataturk) against the weak government of the Sultan and by the unexpected defeat, in the Greek elections, of the sound Prime Minister Venizelos (who had brought Greece into the war on the side of the Allies). His pro-German opponent, King Constantine, ousted Venizelos. Faced with Ataturkist resistance to the Greek occupation and gravely misjudging the reaction of the Allies, the King's General Staff decided in 1921 to launch

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<sup>37</sup> The described historical events of this section are mainly based on R. Clogg's *A Short History of Modern Greece*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1979, and on N. Svoronos' *Histoire de la Grece Moderne*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972 [Greek translation: *Episkopese tes Neoellinekes Historias*, Athens: Themelio, 1976].

an attack against Ataturk's stronghold in Ankara. Advancing from Izmir, the Greek armies came within fifty miles of Ankara, where, with greatly overextended communications, they were crushingly defeated by the revived Turkish forces under Ataturk's command in a counter-attack in the summer of 1922. Izmir was destroyed and burned, and some 1,350,000 Greek refugees were expelled from Asia Minor to fall on the resources of the impoverished Greek homeland.

The events of this period left a trauma in both countries, and not least Turkey, where even today there is a tendency to see a revival of the *Great Idea* in any Greek move thought hostile to Turkish interests. But these events also led to a new and stable relationship that lasted until the onset of the present Cyprus dispute. The basis of this relationship was the Treaty of Lausanne<sup>38</sup> (signed in 1923) under which Greece, Turkey, Great Britain, and France determined the frontier and created a balance between the two countries. A consequence of the frontier settlement was the exchange of populations agreed in the 1923 Treaty. Under it the entire Greek Orthodox population remaining in Asia Minor, with the exception of those in Istanbul and on the islands of Imbros and Tenedos, was transferred to Greece and the Muslim population, except that in western Thrace, to Turkey. Although by modern stands, the exchange paid little attention to human rights, it helped to defuse more than a century of tension, and the spirit of the 1930s "Venizelos-Ataturk era"<sup>39</sup> is today recalled approvingly in both countries.

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<sup>38</sup> Full text of the Lausanne Treaty can be found in Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Treaties of Peace 1919-1923, Vol. II*, New York, 1924.

[Available Online: <http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1918p/lausanne.html>].

<sup>39</sup> Ataturk and Venizelos put the cooperative framework in place with the bilateral Convention on Establishment of Commerce and Navigation they signed in 1930.

However, some scholars<sup>40</sup> cite this period as proof that the two nations can coexist and cooperate only if there are strong statesmen to show the way.

#### **B. POST WORLD WAR II - 1974**

World War II became a turning point in Greek-Turkish relations, since Greece became suspicious about Turkey's true intentions after its refusal to enter the conflict on the allied side, opting instead to remain neutral. Turkey chose a different path to follow, an approach perceived in Athens as a direct hit against the Venizelos-Ataturk agreement. Nevertheless, a further settlement underlying today's frontiers was, after World War II, the Treaty of Paris (1947) between Italy and the Allies, including Greece, which disposed of Italy's overseas possessions. Among these were the Dodecanese islands: Astypalaia, Rhodes, Telos, Chalki, Karpathos, Kasos, Megisti, Nysiros, Kalymnos, Leros, Patmos, Lipsos, Syme, Cos, and their "adjacent islets"<sup>41</sup>. These islands had in most cases been under Ottoman rule from the sixteenth century until taken by Italy in the Italian-Turkish war of 1912. The Treaty of Lausanne, part of the World War I peace settlement, had then confirmed their Italian ownership. Turkish commentators sometimes argue that Turkey "agreed to" their transfer to Greece thirty-five years later as a token of Greece's joining the post-war Western alliance. But this is not so. The Dodecanese islands, with an overwhelmingly (over 95 percent) Greek population, were awarded to Greece in compensation for its victorious resistance against the Italian attack in 1940 and its

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<sup>40</sup> Among them are George Daskalakes, *The Greek Problem*, Athens: Ekdotiki, 1954, Andreas Kyrou, *Greek Foreign Policy*, Athens: Epikairotota, 1985, Constantinos Tsoukalas, *The Greek Tragedy*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969.

<sup>41</sup> This phrase ("and their adjacent islets") acquired significant importance after the Imia (Kardak) islets' Crisis (1996) for each side's sovereignty's claims over the islets.

sufferings under wartime Italian and German occupation in 1941-1945. Furthermore, “Turkey, a neutral in World War II, was in no position to obstruct the transfer, even if she had wished to do so.”<sup>42</sup>

The interlude of peace ended in the 1950s, when ethnic violence reappeared. The major focus of renewed discord was Cyprus, where Greeks and Turks had lived peacefully together in mixed communities under British rule since 1878. The prospect of independence raised the tinderbox issue of how power would be shared in the new government, given the ethnic imbalance, which in this case heavily favored the Greek side. The debate over the island’s future rapidly kindled deep mistrust between Greeks and Turks. In 1955, a nationalistic organization known as EOKA (from its Greek-language initials) initiated a campaign of terrorist violence intended to drive out the British and bring about the island’s unification with Greece. Turkish Cypriots feared that such an outcome would empower the Greek majority to dominate the island and expel Turks. Thus, emotions ran high, not only in Cyprus, but in the two mother countries as well. In September 1955, a pogrom was unleashed in Istanbul against the ethnic Greeks still living there –some 250,000 then. Many ethnic Greeks were injured or killed, their shops destroyed, and their churches desecrated; today only a few thousand ethnic Greeks remain there<sup>43</sup>.

The British thwarted EOKA’s bid for unification and “appealed to the Turkish population in an effort to pit one population against the other, setting the stage for many

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<sup>42</sup> Andrew Wilson, *The Aegean Dispute*, Adelphi Paper 15, London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1979], p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Alexis Alexandris, *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations, 1918-1974*, Athens: Center for Asia Minor Studies, 1992.

of the animosities that exist still.”<sup>44</sup> Therefore, in 1960 Britain named Turkey too as a co-guarantor country, along with Greece, of the settlement known as the London-Zurich agreements and granted independence to the Republic of Cyprus. The new nation was given a complex, delicately balanced bicomunal government that proved problematic from the beginning and broke down entirely in December 1963 when vicious fighting erupted, with each side accusing the other of unprovoked killings. In March 1964 the first UN troops arrived in Cyprus to form the multinational peacekeeping force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), which remains in place to this day.

In 1974 deadly conflict exploded on the island when the military government in Athens, echoing EOKA’s earlier theme of union with Greece, mounted a coup in Nicosia against the government of Archbishop Makarios. Turkey reacted by invoking its guarantor role and unilaterally sending a military force, which quickly seized a substantial slice of the island. A subsequent Turkish military operation expanded Turkish positions and consolidated control over the northern third of the island, including a section of the capital, Nicosia. A cease-fire was declared, and a “Green Line” was drawn between the two sides, leaving the Turkish Cypriots (comprising eighteen percent of the total population in 1999) with over thirty-seven percent of the island, which they still hold.<sup>45</sup> Some 180,000 Greek Cypriots were expelled to the south and, since that time, the two communities have had little or no contact with each other. The Greek Cypriot administration was reinstated and recognized worldwide (except for Turkey) as the sole legitimate government of Cyprus. Turkish Cypriots refused to participate until a new

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<sup>44</sup> Patricia Carley, from Bancheli, Couloumbis, and Carley, *Greek-Turkish Relations and U.S. Foreign Policy: Cyprus, the Aegean, and Regional Stability*, [Washington, U.S. Institute of Peace, 1997], p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> F. Brenchley and E. Fursdon, *The Aegean and Cyprus*, London: RISCT Conflict Studies 232, 1990.

governmental structure was agreed upon, and set up their own administration on their side of the truce line<sup>46</sup>.

Turks remember the tragic events of 1974 as a legal intervention to prevent the bloodbath that in their view was certain to follow the coup attempt. Greeks recall the history as an invasion by the Turkish Army, which seized and still illegally occupies territory of the sovereign nation of Cyprus. Washington, which conceivably could have prevented the brief but costly war, was distracted by the Watergate investigation, and acted too late to accomplish anything except helping to bring about a cease-fire, thereby freezing in place an unhappy situation. Many Greeks remain, perhaps not unjustifiably,<sup>47</sup> convinced that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger encouraged the Greek dictatorship in Athens to pursue the coup against the sometimes left-leaning president of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios.

### C. POST 1974

Since 1974 these concrete Greek-Turkish disputes have festered, aggravated by incidents and misunderstandings that have regularly given rise to outbursts of patriotic charges and countercharges. Perilous military clashes were avoided in the Aegean only at the eleventh hour in a 1987 incident when Turkey tried to resume oil explorations in the

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<sup>46</sup> In 1983, the Turkish-Cypriots declared themselves a state: the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), an entity so far recognized only by Turkey.

<sup>47</sup> Among the most enlightening articles describing the 1974 events and the U.S. role in the Cyprus crisis is Laurence Stern's "Bitter Lessons: How We Failed in Cyprus," [Foreign Policy, Vol. 48, 1975]. In his article, Sterns imputes a great share of responsibility to the Secretary of State then Henry Kissinger. Indeed, many scholars have criticized Kissinger for his "personal-type" management of the crisis. In his book *Diplomacy* [New York: Touchstone, 1995], Kissinger by not even mentioning the word "Cyprus" or the 1974 events through the entire (900 page-long) book, further contributes to this criticism.

disputed continental shelf, and again at the last minute in early 1996, when a dispute erupted over the sovereignty of uninhabited Imia (Kardak) islets off the Turkish coast that described on the previous chapter.

The collapse of Soviet Communism radically altered the environment in the Greek and Turkish “front yards,” and many would argue that positive aspects of the new situation should help prospects for reconciliation across the Aegean. Vast new economic possibilities are inherent in the change from command to market economies. Perhaps most important, the future southeastern expansion of the European Union is bringing new resources along with a dynamic boost to democratization throughout the area. In these circumstances, Athens and Ankara both have much to gain from settling their differences. As the two strongest economies in the region, Greece and Turkey are well placed to benefit from exploiting economic opportunities and shaping developments in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Balkans, where their own security could be threatened by runaway conflicts. Working together to their mutual advantage, they could exert a powerful influence on the countries newly emerging from Communist pasts.

Perversely, however, post-Cold War instability and ethnic strife in the arc from the Caspian to the Adriatic have served more to exacerbate differences between Greece and Turkey than to encourage political, economic, and defense cooperation between them. Antithetical sympathies, notably in the cases of Kurds versus Turks, Orthodox Serbs versus Muslim Bosnians and Albanians, and Armenians versus Azerbaijanis, have fueled mutual suspicions. Although governments in both Ankara and Athens have exercised commendable caution by staying closely aligned with the West in Balkan peacekeeping activities, any new downturn in the former Yugoslavia, such as the current

Kosovo crisis, activates emotional concerns, mostly unwarranted, among nervous neighbors that there could be disastrous spillover:

The stability and security of the entire Balkan Peninsula may be at risk. Prolonged disequilibrium could set back the development of newly emerging democracies in the region. An expanded conflict would likely bring Greece and Turkey key NATO allies into the conflict, probably on opposite sides.<sup>48</sup>

However, the disastrous earthquakes of 17 August 1999 in Western Turkey and the followed on 07 September 1999 in Athens brought closer the two countries, perhaps not only emotionally but politically as well, to the point that some inserted the new term “earthquake diplomacy”<sup>49</sup> to describe a turning point towards reconciliation. Indeed, much has been written<sup>50</sup> for this new momentum in the Greek-Turkish relations and hopes have risen on both sides of the Aegean for the peaceful settlement of the dispute.

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<sup>48</sup> From Stephen J. Blank, William T. Johnsen, and Earl H. Tilford, *U.S. Policy in the Balkans: A Hobson's Choice*, Institute of Strategic Studies, August 1995.

<sup>49</sup> For example, see the articles “Greek- Turkish Quakes Ease Ties” (*The Washington Times*, 17 September 1999), and “Can Greeks Love Turks?” (*Jane's Foreign Report*, 11 November 1999).

<sup>50</sup> I provide a least portion of titles and quotes of some articles on this issue:

- “Turkish, Greek Defense Ministers on ‘Unique Cooperation’ since Earthquakes.” *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 11 September 1999.
- “Earthquakes Help Improve Greek-Turkish Relationship: Goodwill Eases Tensions.” (*The Washington Post*, 10 November 1999).
- “Earthquake Heals Aegean Rift.” (*Jane's Intelligence Review*, 01 December 1999).
- “Greek Foreign Minister George Papandreou and his Turkish counterpart Ismail Cem signed a number of bilateral agreements on Thursday in a spirit of goodwill that has rarely been seen between the two old rivals.” (*Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 20 January 2000).

## IV. SECURITY CONCERNS

### A. GENERAL OVERVIEW

In Turkey's view, the fundamental source of tension is Greece's conviction that the Aegean Sea is essentially Greek. Greece's current determination to expand the limit of territorial waters from six to twelve nautical miles would diminish the Turkish and international share to an unacceptably low level, as would Greece's claim to a ten mile national airspace limit. The Turks believe that they are seeking only to ensure Turkey's freedom of access to the high seas and international airspace. Greece, on the other hand, claims that several international treaties have provided an acceptable territorial regime in the Aegean and that Turkish actions in the 1970s challenged this status quo by claiming additional airspace and seabed rights. The Imia (Kardak) crisis intensified Greek apprehensions about Turkey's aims to undermine the territorial integrity of Greece. The Greeks believe that all the Aegean issues are legal matters that can best be arbitrated in international courts; the Turks insist on viewing them as political matters requiring bilateral negotiations.

Greece maintains that there is only one legitimate Aegean issue: delimiting the continental shelf. The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne did not address this, and Greece is willing to negotiate about it with submission to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The other Turkish claims, Greece maintains, involve non-negotiable questions of sovereignty. Turkey maintains that all the Aegean questions are interrelated and must be dealt with comprehensively to preserve the equities intended by the governing treaties, in particular

the Lausanne treaty. It proposes bilateral talks before recourse to international mediation, whether to the ICJ or some other third party, are considered. Many Turks, ignoring Greece's legal point, take the Greek refusal to sit down at the negotiating table as demonstration of an unreasonable, even hostile, attitude.

It is generally accepted that Greece has the strongest legal claim; and Turkey has implicitly accepted this position by refusing the impartial arbitration of the International Court of Justice. Instead, Turkey has called for bilateral negotiations to decide the status of the disputed areas of the Aegean Sea, a rational strategy given Turkey's greater "weight" on the negotiating table. However, the Greeks argue that such negotiations would inevitably benefit Turkey. Greece has control of almost all the islands in that area and therefore holds all the cards. Negotiations inevitably involve some "horse-trading", and for them to be successful Greece would have to concede some of its territory, while Turkey has almost nothing to lose. Indeed, Athens believes that Turkey increasingly resorts to "bullying tactics" so that Greece will submit to the role of "little brother" and accept Turkey's regional superiority. However, as Greeks say, this is a recipe for instability, as well as a breach of the Lausanne Treaty, which established equilibrium between the two countries.

Both sides agree about the need to settle the Aegean issues peacefully, and neither side views war as an acceptable means of conflict resolution. Nevertheless, they disagree over the nature of the disputes and the methods that should be used to resolve them. War would be catastrophic for both countries, since, regardless of the tactical advantage of either side, Greece and Turkey would inevitably be drawn into a protracted cycle of *revanche* conflicts along the lines of those plaguing India and Pakistan or Israel and the

Arab countries. The less obvious cost of such a war would be the region's classification as a war zone, resulting in a decline in domestic and foreign investment, trade, and economic performance.

## B. TURKISH SECURITY CONCERNS

Many scholars<sup>51</sup> point out that, compared to the extreme preoccupation of the Greek media with the so-called Turkish threat, the press in Turkey has focused much less on Greece, treating Greek-Turkish relations as important, but not as their exclusive preoccupation. For the average Turk, unlike his Greek counterpart, the problems between the two countries are more of a nuisance than a danger. This difference stems essentially from the fact that while Turkey may be the greatest problem for Greece, the Turks have more pressing problems than their relations with the Greeks: the disastrous state of economy and one of the world's highest inflation rates;<sup>52</sup> the abated but persistent political violence and instability; a military involvement in politics, especially in foreign affairs; the Kurdish separatist movement; bad relations and disputes with almost every neighbor country –it is arguable that Turkey ought rather to be happy to have a neighbor like Greece, considering its other neighbors: fundamentalist Iran; unpredictable, defeated,

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<sup>51</sup> Among them Theodore A. Couloumbis in *The United States, Greece, and Turkey: The Troubled Triangle*; New York: NY, Praeger, 1983, and Tozun Bahcheli in *Greek-Turkish Relations Since 1955*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990.

<sup>52</sup> "Turkey's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew at a 7%-8% annual rate between 1995 and 1997, with annual wholesale inflation of 82%-89%. In 1998, real GDP grew at a slower, 2.8% rate. This is expected (by the OECD) to slow even further to around 2% in 1999 (GDP actually fell in the first quarter of 1999)... High inflation remains a serious problem for Turkey, although it is below the triple digit levels Turkey experienced earlier in the decade. Turkey also has a high foreign debt burden (\$101 billion) and an inefficient tax collection system, while privatization has lagged far behind target." Source: *National Energy Information Center*, Washington D.C. [Available Online: <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/turkey.html>].

but not annihilated Iraq; Syria, openly supporting the Kurdish rebellion, even more loudly demanding a greater share of the Euphrates waters, and likely to become even more assertive if, as it seems lately, it comes to terms with Israel; in Bulgaria, Turkey's attempt to play the role of a political arbiter through the minority party there misfired badly; its attempt to gain decisive influence in Azerbaijan failed too; Armenia is still hostile; Georgia cannot escape Russian influence; and the prospect of Turkey making its presence felt in the Turkish-speaking central Asian republics has proved less than meager; and, last but not least, the ongoing struggle between the secularists and the fundamentalists. Naturally, each one of the above issues threaten Turkey's security environment more directly than the dispute with Greece over Aegean. For example (on the dispute with Syria and Iraq):

These days, a visitor to the frontier between Turkey and Syria at Jerablus will encounter much frustration and tension. Due to awesome border defenses on the Turkish side—including hundreds of kilometers of minefields, watchtowers, razor-wire fences, radar and ground sensors as well as electronic eavesdropping devices—no cameras are permitted....

Syria's official position is that there are good reasons to support the PKK. The first of these is the Euphrates water issue, which involves Turkey building dozens of dams across one of the great rivers of the region. This is not only illegal, says Assad [the President of Syria], it will restrict flow into Syria. Another reason is Turkey's purportedly illegal occupation of Hatay province (formerly known as Alexandretta), which was detached from Syria when that country was part of the French mandate. As Greg Shapland explains in his book *Rivers of Discord*, although you will not find anyone in Paris admitting to it today, Hatay was in effect handed over to prevent the Turks acceding to Nazi advances during the Second World War....

The key to Ankara's GAP program is the construction of 22 dams and 19 hydroelectric projects, which ultimately (at a cost of US\$32 billion, much of which still needs to be found) will revolutionize life for the inhabitants of a region half the size of the UK.... Viewed on this scale, it is perhaps understandable that Syria and Iraq are alarmed. Although Iraq is more dependent on the Tigris and does not regard the issue in quite the

same light as Syria, it is obvious that, once the dams start filling, the depleted flow is likely to affect Baghdad as well....

What has become clear from the dispute (and the hyperbole that has flowed) is that the differences between Turkey and the two Arab nations are essentially about regional power and not water; it is who controls the flow and - at the core of it - the economy of an entire region.<sup>53</sup>

Indeed, many scholars<sup>54</sup> have emphasized the vital importance of these issues for Turkey, and their following consequences that directly threaten its very future prospects. Nonetheless, a more detailed analysis of these issues is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Although the dispute over Aegean and Greece's attitude does not directly threaten Turkey's national security, as Evin<sup>55</sup> states, public opinion can be easily manipulated by populist slogans. Bilateral issues are often used by politicians for short-term political gain and, even more important, by the media, which seek benefit in arousing public emotion. A telling example of irresponsible behavior was the case in January 1996 involving the Turkish newspaper *Hurriyet*. By having its reporters hoist a Turkish flag on Imia (Kardak), the newspaper's action escalated tensions between Greece and Turkey almost to the point of war over this tiny Aegean islet, as we described in a previous chapter. This tendency to give populist appeal precedence over professionalism is also reflected in the European editions of several key Turkish newspapers, which exaggerate what they see as cases of discrimination against the Turkish community in Germany.

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<sup>53</sup> "The Oldest Threat: Water In The Middle East," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 01 February 1998, pp.21-22.

<sup>54</sup> For a further analysis on the above topics see J. Pettifer, *The Turkish Labyrinth, Atatürk and the New Islam*, London: Penguin Books, 1998; Heinz Kramer, *Turkey Toward 2000: Political and Religious Developments Threaten National Stability*, Brookings Institute, 1999; Jonathan Rupman, *Atatürk's Children: Turkey and the Kurds*, London: Cassell, 1996; Tim Kelsey, *Dervish: The Invention of Modern Turkey*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996; Andrew Mango, *Testing Time in Turkey*, Washington Quarterly, Winter 1997, Vol. 20, No. 1; Shireen T. Hunter, *Turkey at the Crossroads: Islamic Past or European Future*, Brussels: CEPS Paper, No. 63, 1995.

<sup>55</sup> Ahmet Evin, *Modern Turkey: Continuity and Change*, Oplanden, Germany: Leske and Budrich, 1984.

Furthermore, the absence of any real political authority in Turkey in recent years must be taken into account. Though Turkish foreign policy has not been subject to significant turns with changes in government, certain political factors nonetheless are significant. First, Evin contended, Greek-Turkish issues are not likely to be settled without political will on both sides, and in Turkey there is a lack of political authority because of the succession of unstable coalition governments, not to mention the powerful National Security Council, where the military still exercises definitive political influence<sup>56</sup>. Under these conditions, any number of actors, from the media to the military, is able to take actions that influence Turkey's relations with Greece, either directly or indirectly. Second is the growing isolationism in Turkey's political arena, which stands in direct contrast to the objective of the increasing globalization of Turkish business –an increase that, however, the United States takes for granted.<sup>57</sup>

“Isolationism versus cosmopolitanism” constitutes the main axis of Turkish politics lately, rather than the more traditional right-left divide. Isolationist sentiments are found among religious supporters of the Islamist Refah Party (RP)<sup>58</sup>, some ultra-nationalists in the Motherland Party (ANAP), and some “die-hard statist” in the Democratic Left Party (DSP). Thus the country's political axis does not necessarily divide various political parties, but cuts across them; in most parties, globalists are in the minority. Moreover, this lack of political authority, resulting possibly in domestic

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<sup>56</sup> Various cases demonstrate this influence in recent years. For example, on 18 June 1997 then Turkish President Erbakan, leader of the Islamist Welfare Party [RP], resigned under heavy pressure from the military; on 24 April 1996 then Prime Minister Ciller investigated by the military for charges of corruption.

<sup>57</sup> The U.S. Department of Commerce has designated Turkey as one of ten countries on which it maintains extensive information for businessmen. See the web site dedicated to this purpose: [www.ita.doc.gov/bems](http://www.ita.doc.gov/bems)

<sup>58</sup> Welfare Party or RP was officially outlawed on 22 February 1998.

instability in Turkey, would not work to Greece's advantage in the end. As most scholars argue, a political weak Turkey is more likely to take preemptive strategic action.

For various and often contradictory reasons, hardliners in these different parties share a suspicion of Europe and the West in general. Greece's alleged strategy of blocking the EU's financial protocols with Turkey in the past, lends credit to the isolationists' arguments that Europe is, after all, ready to accommodate Greece in that "Christian club," while it will never show the same degree of cooperation and collegiality to Turkey. Yet Turkey's alienation from the European camp ultimately will not benefit Greece, as most of the scholars and officials from both sides point out lately<sup>59</sup>. Including Turkey in a common European space, with its history of bargaining to settle disputes, will be a better way of reaching accommodation with Turkey than isolating it to look after itself in a hostile environment.

## C. GREEK SECURITY CONCERNS

### 1. General

Two specific treaties provide for the territorial regime of the Aegean and guarantee the inviolability of the region's frontiers: the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne (covering the northeastern and eastern Aegean islands) and the 1947 Treaty of Paris (covering the Dodecanese islands and islets). During the post-Lausanne era, both Greece and Turkey were considered status quo countries and found common ground that was

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<sup>59</sup> For example, since 1995 FM Pagkalos and Papandreu openly favor Turkey's integration into EU. See also Andrew Mango, *Turkey: The Challenge of a New Role*, Washington Papers Nr. 163, Praeger, 1994.

solidified in the 1930 Friendship Treaty signed by Ataturk and Venizelos, as we previously mentioned. This common position helped both countries stave off outside pressures, not least from revisionist powers like Mussolini's Italy or the Soviet Union. In fact, this state of affairs lasted almost half a century, until the early 1970s.

According to Alexandris<sup>60</sup>, it was during 1973-1975 that Ankara, for the first time since the 1920s, questioned the status quo in the Aegean by laying claim to the eastern half of Aegean airspace and seabed rights. Turkey now claims that the border between the two countries in the Aegean lies strictly between the two mainland coasts. Yet Greece, Alexandris contended, bases its position on legal norms and prescriptions, particularly on the 1958 UN Conventions on the Law of the Sea and the 1982 Law of the Sea Treaty. These international conventions stipulate the islands' right to a continental shelf and give coastal states the right to extend their territorial waters to twelve miles. Arguing that the delineation of the Aegean shelf is a legal matter, Alexandris asserted that the Greeks invite the Turks to refer this issue to international arbitration. However, Turkey, which has not signed the Geneva Conventions on the Law of the Sea, maintains that the Aegean question is a political matter and must be resolved through bilateral negotiations.

## **2. Perceptions of the Threat: Myth or Reality?**

The view in Greece was that Turkey since the late 1930s had been acting as an unsatisfied and revanchist state toward its neighbors. For example, many Greek

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<sup>60</sup> Alexis Alexandris, T. Veremis, P. Kazakos, H. Rozakis, V. Coufoudakis, and G. Tsitsopoulos, *Greek-Turkish Relations 1923-1987*, Athens: Gnosi, 1991.

scholars<sup>61</sup> point up Turkey's "flexible and evasive" behavior throughout the years of World War II when Turkey would tilt in the direction of Germany or of the British-Americans in accordance with the vacillating tactical and strategic fortunes of the war. In each instance, as the Turks approached the brink of entering the war on one side or the other, they had consistently sought to link their entry to acquisition of territory from their neighbors and especially from Greece. It seems that these Greek concerns about Turkish ambitions on their territory are not groundless. Indeed, Turkey's acquisitiveness became apparent just after World War II, since "her [Turkey's] demand for a foothold in the Dodecanese may be more seriously intended."<sup>62</sup>

The Greek perceptions of the rising Turkish threat were reinforced by structural changes in the demographic conditions of the region. While Greece's small population remained nearly static, inching gradually toward the ten million mark, Turkey was experiencing one of the fastest population growth rates in the world and currently numbers a little more than sixty-five million, with four times bigger birth rate than Greece's as well.<sup>63</sup> The growing population gap and the territorial asymmetry (Turkey's area is six times bigger than Greece's), clearly reinforced "David and Goliath" type images. One of the strongest indications of Turkish expansionism in Greek eyes was the 1974 invasion of Cyprus and the continued occupation of Cyprus' northern territories, as part of undisguised attempt to partition the island by force of arms. For the Greeks, Turkish behavior with respect to Cyprus has been reinforcing an image that their

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<sup>61</sup> Couloumbis; Thanos Veremis, *History of Greek-Turkish Relations 1453-1998*, Athens: Sideris, 1998.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted from Declassified Document *Joint Intelligence Staff, Note by the Secretary, Department Of Defense -Top Secret*. Issue date: 9 November 1945. Date declassified: 24 April 1973 [CD-ROM: 1975040100132], Fiche#: 1975-74C, p.8.

<sup>63</sup> CIA: *The World Fact Book*, 1999.

neighbor will not hesitate to change the territorial arrangements of its surrounding region by the use of force whenever a low-risk opportunity is presented. Of course, the 1980s-1990s events in Aegean further contribute to this image. The major points most frequently cited by Greek officials and the media include the following:

- A plethora of statements made by Turkey's high-level political and military elites challenging the territorial status quo in the Aegean and complaining about the close proximity of Greece's islands to Turkey's Aegean shores.
- The presence of the powerful Turkish Fourth Army, referred to by the Turks as the "Army of the Aegean," located near Izmir. The Aegean Army was seen as stalking (as was the case in Cyprus some years before) the area waiting for an opportunity to strike such islands as Samothrace, Lemnos, Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Kos, and Rhodes.
- Turkish refusal to submit the issue of delimitation of the Aegean continental shelf to the International Court of Justice. The refusal is coupled with a consistent unwillingness on the part of Turkey<sup>64</sup> to employ methods of peaceful settlement of disputes through third-party arbitration and international conciliation procedures.
- An alarming attempt of Turkey to escalate the nature of the Greek-Turkish face-off beyond the nuclear threshold.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> This aversion is characteristically apparent in then Prime Minister Yilmaz that "the Aegean is a very special situation, in which International Law cannot be implemented." (*Washington Post*, 3 August 1997).

<sup>65</sup> During his official visit in Canada, Greek President Stefanopoulos expressed his concerns to the Canadian Prime Minister Chretien regarding the future building of a nuclear facility in Akuyu, Turkey. This nuclear facility is based on a Turkish-Canadian consortium and transfer of Canadian know-how. (*Athens News Agency*, 30 May 2000). For more on this issue, see Spyros Traiforos, *The Nuclear*

### 3. Regional Balancer

Greeks are also alarmed with Turkey's desire to play the role of a powerful state, wishing to be a regional balancer (or "regional policeman" for some) and enjoying political and military encouragement (through the supply of sophisticated weapons delivery programs) by the United States.<sup>66</sup> Visions in Greece of an expansionist Turkey, playing a role in the region analogous to that of the Shah of Iran during the 1970s, tend to exacerbate Greek apprehensions. Indeed, events and Turkish diplomacy's activities since the late 1980s give some credit to these apprehensions. At that time, under the leadership of its then prime minister and later president Turgut Özal, Turkey intensified its efforts to become integrated into the European Community (EC), as it was then called. As a part of this strategy, Turkey applied for full membership of the EC in 1987. The EC's refusal to accept Turkey's application accelerated the process of new thinking in Turkey about alternative strategies to follow. It was during this period that Turkey began to develop the idea of a Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) zone.<sup>67</sup> On the intellectual front, a number of political analysts and key politicians were beginning to openly challenge the underpinnings of Turkey's foreign policy, especially its prudent and non-interventionist dimensions. One important aspect of this rethinking was a reassessment of the Ottoman past and efforts to develop a modern version of *Ottomanism* as a framework for a new Turkish worldview and foreign policy. The emergence of the neo-Ottomanist school of

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*Establishment: Existing Facilities, Resources And Capabilities*, January 1999. [Available Online: <http://www.defensor-pacis.gr/iss01/index.html>].

<sup>66</sup> A. Giokaris, H. Dipla, and A. Dimitrakopoulos, *Points of Friction in Greek-Turkish Relations*, Athens: Sideris, 1994, pp. 84-89.

<sup>67</sup> On the beginning of the BSEC, see O. Sander, "Turkey and the Organization for Black Sea Economic Cooperation" in K. H. Karpat (ed.) *Turkish Foreign Policy: Recent Developments*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996.

thought was partly the culmination of a ten-year old process of rehabilitation of Turkey's Ottoman past. As Edward Mortimer put it, Özal "had debunked the orthodox Kemalist vision of history with its near deification of Atatürk and the denigration of the Ottoman past."<sup>68</sup> The underlying theme of the neo-Ottomanism was that Turkey should no longer be bound by the straitjacket of the Kemalist theory or, at least, the particular interpretation of Atatürk's thinking that was accepted during most of the life of the modern Turkish republic. Once freed from this partly self-imposed limitation, neo-Ottomanists, such as Turkish journalist Cengiz Candar, recommended that Turkey "must develop an imperial vision" and pursue the "free movement of people, ideas and goods in the lands of the old Ottoman empire."<sup>69</sup>

This period also saw a revival of pan-Turkist ideas, although they were more fully elaborated after the Soviet Union's fall. Many intellectuals, political analysts and some officials began to talk about the need to shed old taboos against pan-Turkism. Thus, Aydin Yalcin wrote that pan-Turkism was an idea whose time had arrived. According to him, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the discrediting of communism "had finally given a public expression and support to pan-Turkism."<sup>70</sup> The head of the Turkic Department of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, Bilal Samir, gave expression to this new vision: Turkey's efforts to develop ties with the Turkic republics could lead to the emergence of "something similar to the Nordic Council, the Arab League, or the

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<sup>68</sup> Edward Mortimer, "A Tale of Two Funerals: Reviving Islam Challenges Atatürk's Legacy of Secularism", *Financial Times Surveys: Turkey*, 7 May 1993, p. 18.

<sup>69</sup> Cited from S. Cohen, "Contact with Central Asian States: A Foundation for Pan-Turkism", *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, August/September 1992, p. 32.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Organization of American States.... What is more natural than Turkey taking the lead in creating such a grouping? ...This is not expansionism. ...The Nordics, the Arabs, the Latins and others have such groups. Why should not the Turkish people?"<sup>71</sup>

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 and the ensuing events that led to the formation of an international coalition against Saddam Hussein and, eventually, to the war of 1991 initially confronted Turkey with a difficult choice: to remain neutral in the conflict or to become an active participant in the anti-Saddam coalition?

Though Turkey's traditional policy of minimum involvement in Middle Eastern conflicts had served it well and that there was no need to alter that policy, then President Özal opted for Turkey's full engagement in the anti-Saddam coalition, arguing that the changes triggered by the end of the Cold War necessitated a more activist and less cautious Turkish policy at regional and international levels. He perceived that the Iraq crisis offered Turkey an opportunity to demonstrate its continued strategic importance to its allies. Thus he talked about the pivotal role that Turkey should play in setting up a Gulf war structure of the Middle East, including its becoming a pillar of the post-Gulf war security system in the Persian Gulf.

Though many of these expectations did not materialize, the shift produced in the regional balance of power by the Gulf war, largely because of the enhanced US military and political presence in the Persian Gulf and the weakening of the anti-Western countries in the Middle East, created new policy options for Turkey and enhanced its

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

relative power vis-à-vis its neighbors and, hence, its freedom of action.<sup>72</sup> The best example of this new configuration is the strategic and political alliance formed between Israel and Turkey. The alliance has obvious benefits for Turkey in terms of enhancing its military, industrial, and technological capabilities. The costs are mostly in terms of relations with Arab and Muslim countries. The unhappiness of these countries about Turkish-Israeli ties was clearly demonstrated during the Islamic summit of December 1997 in Tehran.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, as we previously stated, the ease of tensions between Israel and Syria and a possible rapprochement after the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon<sup>74</sup> somehow weakens Turkey's benefits from this alliance, since Syria's focus may shift towards the issue of the disputed Euphrates waters more actively.

In general, Turkey, "by systematically following the tactic of creating military alliances, even with Balkan countries—as for example the current military cooperation with Albania for the naval base in Adriatic—attempts to upgrade its position within the unstable post-Cold War context and its consolidation as a regional regulatory superpower in eastern Mediterranean."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> For more on this see John Roper, "The West and Turkey: Varying Roles, Common Interests," *The International Spectator*, Volume XXXIV No. 1, January-March 1999; Kenneth Moss, "Strategic Choices in the Mediterranean: Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 4 No. 1, March 2000; Sean Kay and Judith Yaphe, "Turkey's International Affairs: Shaping the U.S.-Turkey Strategic Partnership," *Strategic Forum*, No. 122, November 1997.

<sup>73</sup> On Israeli-Turkish alliance, see D. Pipes, "A New Axis: The Emerging Turkish-Israeli Entente," *National Interest*, No. 50, Winter 1997-98.

<sup>74</sup> See the article "For the Lebanese, a Cherished Peace," *Washington Post*, 28 May 2000, p. A20.

<sup>75</sup> James Pettifer, *The Turkish Labyrinth: Atatürk and the New Islam*, London: Penguin, 1998, p. 123.

## D. DANGEROUS GAMES OVER THE AEGEAN

### 1. The Facts

An often misjudged, given its explosive potential, issue is the so-called “Aeronautical War” or “Virtual War” over the Aegean. This, sometimes on a daily basis, confrontation has become an irrefutable proof of Turkey’s expansionist goals in Greek eyes. Furthermore, this undeclared war occurs with the same tension no matter the status of relations between Greece and Turkey. For example, 1988 was characterized as a year with the most impressive record of attempts of rapprochement between Athens and Ankara: Davos, Brussels, Vouliagmeni, and Istanbul.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, in President Özal’s visit in Greece on 13-15 June 1988 (the first by a Turkish Premier in 36 years), Papandreu said in his speech that the “establishment of a climate of détente” was “the most important achievement...of our day.”<sup>77</sup>

However, in this particular “turning point” year –1988– for the Greek-Turkish relationships, Turkey will commit 338 violations of Greek airspace (185 of those beyond the six-miles territory recognized by Turkey), 42 over-flights above Greek islands, 563 violations of the FIR Athens, while finally Turkish fighters will be engaged 62 times with Greek fighters trying to intercept them (dogfights).<sup>78</sup> According to Sazanides, the Turkish practice on these airspace violations follows specific patterns: the penetrations of Turkish

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<sup>76</sup> “Spirit of Davos” Agreement between Papandreu and Özal (then prime ministers), February 1988; they confirm the détente on the Brussels meeting, 18 March 1988; “Memorandum of Confidence Building Measures” between Papoulias and Yilmaz (then foreign ministers) signed in Vouliagmeni, 27 May 1988; “Guidelines for the Prevention of Accidents and Incidents in International Sea and International Airspace,” signed in Istanbul, 8 September 1988.

<sup>77</sup> *Facts on Files News Services*, 24 June 1998. [Available Online: <http://www.2facts.com/stories/index/1988018790.asp>].

<sup>78</sup> Haris Sazanides, *Greece, Turkey, NATO, and the Aegean Airspace*, Thessalonica: Proskino, 1997, p.94.

planes increase, whenever the Greek side makes an announcement regarding the Greek-Turkish issues, or when Turkey wants to succeed on some decision in international organizations. On the other hand, the pace of these penetrations decreases or even stops for a while, when some official from those countries or NATO visits Greece or Turkey.<sup>79</sup>

Moreover, since 1990, after the announcement of the new defense doctrine of Greece (Common Defense Area of Greece-Cyprus)<sup>80</sup>, the Turkish Air Force uses a different tactic with two stages:<sup>81</sup>

- Accomplishes the violation of Greek airspace<sup>82</sup> en mass, with sequent waves of planes.
- Uses whole squadrons and not pairs of planes for these violations.

During 1996-1997 two major events took place: the Imia/Kardak islets incident (29 January 1995-01 February 1996) and the common declaration signed between the Greek Premier Simitis and the Turk President Demirel, on 08 July 1997 –the so-called Madrid Communiqué. Characteristically, during 1996, which began with the Imia/Kardak incident, we observe a huge increase of violations and provocative actions of Turkey in Aegean. Specifically:

- Violations of FIR Athens<sup>83</sup>: 946 (the more until then)
- Violations of Greek airspace: 1667 (by far more, relatively with other years)

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>80</sup> For more on the new Greek defense doctrine see Aristos Aristotelous, *The Common Defense Area of Greece-Cyprus*, Athens: ELIAMEP, 1995.

<sup>81</sup> Kyriakos Kentrotis, *Aeronautical Exercises in Aegean: International Law and Geopolitics*, Athens: Proskinio, 1999, p. 86.

<sup>82</sup> Though the Greek airspace is an issue of dispute, the term “violation of Greek airspace” [used hereof] describes mostly violations beyond the –recognized by Turkey– six nm Greek airspace (*Ibid.*, p. 103).

<sup>83</sup> Though the violation of FIR is another issue of dispute between Greece and Turkey, we mention it since it contributes to the rise of tension between those countries. For legal aspects on this dispute, see Haris Rozakis, *The International Law Regime of Aegean*, Athens: Gnosis, 1988, pp. 269-305.

- Violations by armed squadrons: 538 (the more until then)<sup>84</sup>
- Engagements between fighters -dogfights: 459 (the same applies too)<sup>85</sup>

In 1997, the Imia/Kardak incident continues to undermine the Greek-Turkish relations; on the other hand, the effect of the Confidence Building Measures (CBM) under the Madrid spirit becomes visible. Consequently, on July and August we observe a decrease to the violations; however, the following months of 1997 the Turkish activity increases again (see Table 1). Furthermore, in many instances there was an element introduced for first time to the whole so-called “virtual-war” context. Specifically:

- On 27 March 1997, ambassador Tugkai Eztseri, head of the Turkish delegation in NATO, officially informs with a letter sent to then NATO's Secretary General Xavier Solana, that there are no sea boundaries between Greece and Turkey.<sup>86</sup> Greek then Foreign Minister Pagkalos criticized this statement on the grounds that it directly undermines the Lausanne Treaty.<sup>87</sup> Turkey responded to Greece's criticism and protest with a series of violations (77 during the following week).<sup>88</sup>
- The buzzing of high-ranking officials transport aircrafts; this type of incident, previously mentioned in Chapter II, occurred on 16 October 1997 where Turkish F-16s buzzed the C-130 carrying Tsohatzopoulos, Greek Minister of Defense.
- In October and November of 1997, especially during the annual exercises “LIGHTNING 97” (24-29 October 1997) and “TAURUS-2” (1-8 November

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<sup>84</sup> *Eleftherotypia*, 12 July 1996; *Kathimerini*, 14 October 1997; *Apogeymatini*, 6 February 1997.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> See the full text [in Greek] of this letter in *Eleftherotypia*, 13 April 1997.

<sup>87</sup> *Athens News Agency*, 29 March 1997.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 April 1997.

1997), there is an enormous increase of violations of Greek airspace, taken place all over the Aegean –sometimes reaching Thessaloniki<sup>89</sup>.

- On 10 December 1997 there are 52 violations in a single day (a new record), again reaching Thessaloniki.<sup>90</sup> Characteristically, even the United States inclined from its fixed policy of evenhandedness and condemned those violations<sup>91</sup>, which in any case were monitored by NATO Headquarters in Naples. [Since the early 1997, Greece provides NATO in Naples Headquarters with real-time data of airspace violations committed by Turkey in order to force NATO to condemn these incidents].<sup>92</sup>
- On Christmas day, in contrast of the Vouliagmeni agreement, the Madrid CBM, and under the general “moral” agreement for the abstention from any form of military activities of any kind, Turkey violates the Greek airspace with 18 fighters.<sup>93</sup>
- During the annual exercise “CEVIC PENCE 98,” for the first time, eight areas in Aegean will be blocked from Turkey (see Figure 2) for the time space from 2 to 23 of January 1998.<sup>94</sup> The same tactic in general will repeated the following

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<sup>89</sup> Kentrotis, p. 92.

<sup>90</sup> *Athens News Agency*, 10 December 1997.

<sup>91</sup> See “U.S. Criticizes Turkey For Aegean Flights,” *New York Times*, 12 December 1997. There, “State Department criticized Turkish military flights in the Aegean, calling them ‘needlessly provocative.’” Also, “Military activity of this kind undermines confidence and needlessly exacerbates the tension...”

<sup>92</sup> Kentrotis, p. 92

<sup>93</sup> *Athens News Agency*, 26 December 1997.

<sup>94</sup> See the analysis of this particular exercise of General (Ret.) Diakoumako, former Chief of Hellenic Air Force, in “The Turkish Exercises in Aegean and Ankara’s Challenges,” *Modern Air Force & Navy*, Vol. 34, March-April 1998, pp. 43-49.

months, on February with the blocking of seven areas, on March and April with nine and ten blocked areas respectively.<sup>95</sup>

|                  | 1995             |          | 1996              |          | 1997             |          | 1998             |          |
|------------------|------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|------------------|----------|------------------|----------|
|                  | FIR              | Airspace | FIR               | Airspace | FIR              | Airspace | FIR              | Airspace |
| <b>January</b>   | 74 – 103         |          | 32 – 69           |          | 36 – 42          |          | 85 – 199         |          |
| <b>February</b>  | 40 – 71          |          | 94 – 312          |          | 52 – 37          |          | 76 – 114         |          |
| <b>March</b>     | 17 – 0           |          | 123 – 340         |          | 72 – 78          |          | 57 – 40          |          |
| <b>April</b>     | 55 – 20          |          | 69 – 181          |          | 17 – 59          |          | 43 – 20          |          |
| <b>May</b>       | 35 – 59          |          | 139 – 230         |          | 19 – 18          |          | 72 – 39          |          |
| <b>June</b>      | 55 – 40          |          | 82 – 59           |          | 44 – 42          |          | 106 – 62         |          |
| <b>July</b>      | 13 – 17          |          | 57 – 142          |          | 23 – 29          |          | 86 – 92          |          |
| <b>August</b>    | 10 – 12          |          | 40 – 73           |          | 34 – 12          |          | 55 – 43          |          |
| <b>September</b> | 99 – 61          |          | 52 – 45           |          | 62 – 88          |          | 140 – 163        |          |
| <b>October</b>   | 43 – 30          |          | 95 – 33           |          | 143 – 117        |          | 174 – 25         |          |
| <b>November</b>  | 37 – 40          |          | 138 – 148         |          | 168 – 203        |          | N/A              |          |
| <b>December</b>  | 54 – 64          |          | 25 – 35           |          | 35 – 110         |          | N/A              |          |
| <b>SUM</b>       | <b>532 – 517</b> |          | <b>946 – 1667</b> |          | <b>705 – 835</b> |          | <b>894 – 797</b> |          |

Table 1. Violations of FIR Athens and Greek Airspace, 1995-1998 (Source: *Kathimerini*, 1 November 1998, from *Hellenic Ministry of Defense Records* given to press).

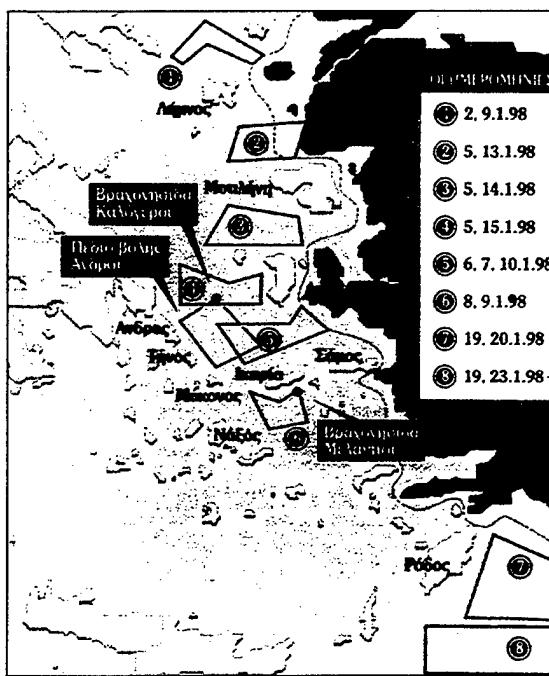


Figure 2. Areas Blocked for Exercise “CEVIC PENCE 98” (Source: *Modern Air Force & Navy*, Vol. 34, March-April 1998, p. 43).

<sup>95</sup> *TA NEA*, 4 May 1998 and *Kathimerini*, 1 June 1998 respectively.

As we previously mentioned, media and officials all over the world considered the summer 1999 earthquakes in Greece and Turkey as the starting point for a new détente in Greek-Turkish relations. Moreover, Turkey's recognition as an applicant country for the EU in the Helsinki Summit (16 December 1999) brought new momentum to the rapprochement, since Greece voted in support of the recognition. However, even on the eve of the Helsinki European Summit, Turkish threats (under the form of "warnings") were part of the agenda:

Turkey warned Greece that it would be "difficult to sustain" the recent improvement in their relationship if Athens were to prevent it from becoming a full candidate for membership of the European Union at the bloc's summit starting today in Helsinki. "This is because for the first time we know all [other] 14 countries are willing to grant Turkey candidacy without any alien preconditions attached to it," said Mehmet Ali Irtemçelik, state minister for human rights and EU relations. "If the EU this time is again unable to grant us that status, Greece will be responsible."<sup>96</sup>

The "warnings" also applied under the form of airspace violations: though in Aegean there was a period of calm after the earthquakes occurred, Turkish fighter aircrafts committed 53 violations of Greek airspace in the southeast Aegean in a single day (29 November 1999) –13 of those violations were over-flights above Greek islands.<sup>97</sup> Similar provocative behavior was demonstrated a few days after the Helsinki Summit, where Turkish fighters massively violated again the Greek airspace; 32 violations with multiple engagements and islands over-flights on 15 December 1999.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> "Helsinki Summit: Better Ties At Risk, Turkey Warns Greece," official statement from *Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 10 December 1999. [Available Online: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grubb/bb5/archive/1999/12/10121999-02.htm>].

<sup>97</sup> *Eleftherotypia*, 30 November 1999.

<sup>98</sup> See "After the Piece, Dogfights Again," *TA NEA*, 15 December 1999.

Currently, "Turkish fighters made an historic landing in Greece on 20 May as part of NATO's largest annual military maneuvers in the eastern Mediterranean, 'DYNAMIC MIX 2000.' Twelve F-16 fighters and three C-130 transport aircraft of the Turkish Air Force landed at Anchialos Air Base to begin air exercises with Greek fighters. The landing of Turkish military aircraft on Greek soil for the first time in 28 years marks another watershed in relations between the two rival NATO allies."<sup>99</sup> However, during this exercise Turkish fighters violated the Greek airspace on 30 May 2000, causing mixed feelings in Athens; even when Greek-Turkish fighters cooperated for the purpose of the exercise, others were engaged in another part of the Aegean continuing the old practice.<sup>100</sup>

## **2. Evaluation of the Facts**

The continuing practice of violations and challenges in the Aegean is leading towards the following findings:

Turkey, after 1974 and especially during the 1990s, demonstrates a further more aggressive character in Aegean. The practice of Turkish violations, or challenges in general, underlines during time the corresponding adjustment that manifest the objectives of Turkey's policy -based on what is effective at each specific time period in bilateral and international level. For example, the pattern of Turkish violations during the 1980s (where there was a Greek quality superiority in sea and air)<sup>101</sup> greatly differs than that of

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<sup>99</sup> "Turkish Jets Land In Greece For First Time In 28 Years," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, 31 May 2000.

<sup>100</sup> See "Even Now Violations?" *Kathimerini*, 1 June 2000.

<sup>101</sup> "While the ground balance may favor Turkey in a sustained campaign, the air balance now appears to favor Greece. ...The Aegean naval balance is also fairly equal as both countries have a roughly equal number of major naval combat vessels." U.S. Senate (Hans Binnendijk and Alfred Friendly), *Turkey, Greece, and NATO: The Strained Alliance*, Washington: Committee on Foreign Relations, 1980, p. 20.

the 1990s, especially after 1994-1995, where the balance changed favoring Turkey.<sup>102</sup>

Indeed, perhaps not accidentally, because of its apparent superiority after 1996, Turkey not only exploits but also creates every kind of opportunity in order to certify in real terms its air power, actually rendering its Air Force as the most powerful weapon of pressure in its policy towards Greece.

Therefore, with the given fact of the increase of Turkish air and sea power in late years, Turkey directly pursues to create via these actions (exercises, violations, and challenges) *fait accompli* in the Aegean. Specifically, the implementation of blocking sea and air regions of Aegean, frequently and for long time periods, mainly intends to:<sup>103</sup>

- Increase the penetration capabilities of Turkish planes to the whole Aegean.
- Achieve tactical air superiority with the objective of air blocking the Greek islands.
- Exhaust and actual freeze the Greek naval and air forces.
- Increase the landing and transport capabilities of the Turkish forces.

Greek official estimations for the Turkish objectives in Aegean show great concern; according to D. Apostolakis, Greek Undersecretary of Defense:

The available evidence encourage the hypothesis that Turkey does not aim towards an all-out war with Greece, but rather works towards various scenarios generally described as “hot incidents.” A possible scenario that comes to light, after the evaluation of the latest Turkish exercises, has as a first phase objective for Turkey to freeze the Hellenic Air Force and to achieve air superiority. During the second phase, Turkish forces are expected to pursue the blocking of Hellenic Navy, in order to insure the freedom of action between the Turkish mainland and the eastern Aegean islands, making impossible for the Hellenic Navy to access this area....

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<sup>102</sup> See *Jane's World Armies: Greece and Turkey*, 18 June 1999.

<sup>103</sup> Kentrotis, p.96.

Moreover, before any attempt of territorial occupation, a substantial damage must be inflicted to the country's defense capabilities. If this damage becomes feasible, then it will allow the occupation of some territory, which will give Turkey a negotiating advantage to serve its main objective, which is to change the Aegean status quo.<sup>104</sup>

In the meantime, Greek vigilance focuses on the protection of the Greek islands off the Turkish coasts. In an August 1996 article of *Air Force Monthly*, three options of a Turkish attack on Greek territory were aired: "The first would be to occupy some of the inhabited Greek islands close to mainland Turkey. Kastelorizo, the most easterly of the Dodecanese chain and barely two miles from the Turkish mainland is an obvious choice, but this seems hardly worth the effort. The much larger islands of Lesbos, Chios and Samos would give much greater long-term strategic gains by opening up a far larger portion of the Aegean."<sup>105</sup> The second Turkish option, according to the author of the article "would be a limited offensive in mainland Thrace. While this seems unlikely, the fact is that both countries are better equipped to fight a series of massive land battles than anything else."<sup>106</sup> The third option, "which would hurt Greece badly, would be the conquest of the remainder of Cyprus ...[however] should Turkey seek to occupy the whole island, it would be faced with a hostile population and an extremely active resistance movement. The game is simply not worth the candle."<sup>107</sup> In conclusion, the author does not exclude an attack on a couple of the larger Greek islands which "might well prove to be a useful bargaining counter for the future, if they can be taken at a

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<sup>104</sup> Quoted from "Ankara's Scenarios in Aegean," *To Vima*, 1 February 1998.

<sup>105</sup> Mike Spick, "Aegean Crossroads," *Air Force Monthly*, August 1996, p. 42.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

reasonable price.”<sup>108</sup> What, not too long ago, appeared by occidental commentators as Greek paranoia, is now being discussed in earnest.

Indeed, these hypothetical scenarios can be found almost everywhere, even at worldwide-recognized think tanks. For example, in 1998 RAND Strategic Institute published a study conducted within the Strategy and Doctrine Program of RAND’s Project AIR FORCE. The study, “sponsored by the Office of Regional Plans and Issues (DCS, Air and Space Operations), was intended to serve Air Force long-range planning needs.”<sup>109</sup> Also, “the study examines key trends and potential sources of conflict through the year 2025, and identifies the implications for the U.S. Air Force and for U.S. national security policy more broadly.”<sup>110</sup> From the sponsors and the authors<sup>111</sup> of this study, as well from the purpose it serves, we can conclude that we have to seriously take it into account.

Evaluating the possible causes of a future Greek-Turkish conflict, the authors share almost identical views with Greek officials, since they too argue that “much of the day-to-day risk in Greek-Turkish relations now stems from air operations, whether in the Aegean or over Cyprus. The air balance is increasingly central to strategic perceptions on all sides. Turkey has made air force modernization a priority, and air power has been the leading vehicle for Turkish assertiveness in the Aegean.”<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Zalmay Khalilzad and Ian O. Lesser, *Sources of Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Regional Futures and U.S. Strategy*, RAND: MR-897-AF, 1998, p.1.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Zalmay Khalilzad is the former Undersecretary of Defense for Planning Issues, Corporate Chair in International Security, and Director of Strategy and Doctrine Program, Project AIR FORCE; Ian O. Lesser is the former head of the department of Mediterranean Affairs of National Intelligence Council of State Department and key researcher of RAND Institution.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

A possible scenario, according to the authors, is the following:

In 2003, a crisis arises over the alleged mistreatment of Turks in Greek Thrace. As friction increases, the two countries conduct simultaneous and overlapping exercises in the Aegean and begin reinforcing the border regions. Several incidents in and over the Aegean—surface-to-air and surface-to-surface targeting radars locking on to aircraft and ships; a Greek and Turkish frigate suffering a minor collision while playing “chicken”—further increase anxieties and animosities. Finally, a major demonstration by ethnic Turks in Greek Thrace turns into a riot, and Greek paramilitary troops intervene, firing into crowds and killing several dozen Turks.

Denouncing the “genocidal policies of the Greek government,” Turkey responds by launching a sudden but limited thrust across the border into Thrace aimed at seizing key centers in which the Turkish population resides—in essence establishing a protected safe haven. Greek forces try to hold this invasion at the border, and Athens declares a 12-mile territorial-waters zone in the Aegean, effectively closing Turkish access to the Aegean. The Greek air force attacks Izmir and other Turkish cities, and the two countries also clash in and over the Aegean.<sup>113</sup>

Generally, we can safely maintain that:

- Turkey’s continuously challenges and aggressive policy in Aegean by the use of its Air Force entails great dangers in elevating the risk of war.
- Greek apprehensions and security concerns regarding these challenges must be more seriously taken into account.

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 321-322.

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## V. ROLE OF THE U.S. POLICY AND INSTITUTIONS

### A. WORLD WAR II – 1974

#### 1. Background

As we have discussed earlier, by the Venizelos and Ataturk leadership, Greece and Turkey settled territorial questions left outstanding in Lausanne and resolved disputes on the terms of population exchange. Although they undoubtedly sought to harvest the benefits of a newfound friendship –the end to a costly arms race and the ability to concentrate on domestic priorities– it was a shared threat that allowed them to overcome their mutual suspicion, which had persisted throughout the past. Faced with the rising power and revisionist ambitions of their neighbors, mainly Italy and Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey reconciled their differences because they felt they had little choice. These ties deepened over the next decade but were tested during World War II. Turkish neutrality struck Greeks as a betrayal of their trust, and Turkey's imposition of a wartime tax that fell especially heavily on minorities introduced further stress into the relationship. Undoubtedly, much more damaging was the revelation, raising doubts about Turkey's commitment to the territorial status quo, that the Allies and Axis had respectively sought to attract Turkey to enter the war or remain on the sidelines by bribing it with Aegean islands to which Greece laid claim.<sup>114</sup>

After World War II, both countries confronted a major communist threat –Turkey directly from the Soviet Union, and Greece from both Bulgaria and its internal

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<sup>114</sup> Tozun Bancheli, *Greek-Turkish Relations Since 1955*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990, pp. 9-15.

communist guerrillas— and the cooperation of the interwar period resumed. Linked by the Truman Doctrine, both sent troops to Korea, and both joined NATO in 1952. The Greek King Paul and Queen Fredericka traveled to Istanbul and Ankara in June 1952, and Turkish President Bayar made an official visit to Greece six months later. Greek Prime Minister Plastiras even raised the possibility of union,<sup>115</sup> and Bayar declared that they represented “the best example of how two countries who mistakenly mistrusted each other for centuries have agreed upon a close and loyal collaboration as a result of the recognition of the realities of life.”<sup>116</sup>

Greece and Turkey reached the zenith of their postwar détente in 1953 when they, along with Yugoslavia, signed the Balkan Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, which was formalized into a mutual defense pact the following year. As Bancheli has observed, “As long as Greek and Turkish interests coincided, as they did for nearly a decade after the Second World War, there was no reason why their warming relationship could not have made further progress. This is what could reasonably have been expected in the early 1950s given their fear of the Soviet Union and commitment to the Western Alliance.”<sup>117</sup> However, events soon exposed the fragility of this relationship. Over two decades of friendship were thrust aside as *enosis* (union) with Cyprus rose to the top of the Greek national agenda.

Many scholars argue for the reasons of the dramatic collapse of the Greek-Turkish détente in the 1950s. Although Cyprus was obviously a critical factor, mainstream accounts suggest two reasons the countries failed to forge a satisfactory compromise as

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

they had on equally divisive issues in the past. First, both lacked leaders of the stature of Venizelos and Ataturk, whose nationalist credentials had permitted them to overcome opposition criticism and offer major concessions. Second, Cyprus indicated that each country assessed its vital interests on the basis of regional concerns, rather than the global considerations that guided American policy. Consequently, American appeals for Greek-Turkish cooperation and unity in view of the Soviet-American confrontation increasingly lost their impact in both countries. To explain the timing of the emergence of *enosis*, historians have asserted that the Greek government delayed formally espousing the Cypriot cause until 1953 because of its dependence on Britain and the United States.<sup>118</sup>

Although these arguments certainly have some credit, they cannot account for the transformation in Greek and Turkish priorities after World War II, since they hardly explain the following questions:

- First, if regional interests, rather than the Cold War, determined the pair's foreign policies, why in 1947 had Turkey not opposed to Greece's incorporation of the long-contested Dodecanese island chain, strategically located off Turkey's southeastern coast?<sup>119</sup> Moreover, if the Soviet threat had bound them together, sparking a renewed detente and suppressing conflicts, why did they, in less than a decade later, find irresolvable a similar territorial dispute?

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<sup>118</sup> Van Coufoudakis, "Greek-Turkish Relations, 1973-1983: The View From Athens," *International Security*, Vol. 9 (4), pp. 189-191.

<sup>119</sup> Although, as we in a previous chapter mentioned, Turkey was in a relatively weak bargaining position after World War II as a neutral, it had conceded the islands to Greece as early as 1943, apparently in exchange for assurance that Greece had abandoned its own revisionist aspirations. For a more detailed insight on the concession of the Dodecanese islands, see the excellent research book of Lena Divane and Fotene Konstantopoulou, Dodecanisos: *H Makra Poreia Pros Tin Ensomatose*, Athens: Kastaniotis, 1996.

- Second, unless Greece and Turkey believed that their security did not depend on the outcome of the contest between the United States and the Soviet Union, and unless neither feared the eastern bloc, the Soviet Union and its satellites should have figured even in their exclusively “regional” calculations. However, a decade later, in the mid-1950s Americans and Europeans generally agreed that the Soviet threat had not abated, and thus the eruption of the Greek-Turkish conflict over such relatively insignificant concerns remains surprising.
- Finally, dependence on foreign powers did not prevent Greece from earlier adopting an *enosis* policy, because Greece was, if anything, more reliant on others, particularly the United States, for its external security and economic rehabilitation.

What had changed was that U.S. policy, because of its focus on Cold War and the Soviet threat, classified this region among its containment priorities and invited Greece and Turkey to join NATO; and our initial hypothesis seems to provide some insight into these developments.

## **2. U.S. Policy and NATO: The Revival of Greek-Turkish Conflict**

After the end of World War II Greece and Turkey, fearful of Soviet designs, pressed the United States for a security commitment. Although Turkish officials acknowledged that domestic politics played into their demands as much as did strategic considerations, they plausibly and repeatedly insisted that the presence of Western military facilities on their territory had made their country into a magnet for Soviet

attack. The United States feared the Turks would opt for neutrality unless it conceded and offered Turkey a place in the young alliance.

Although observers from the Pentagon were impressed by the Turks' anti-Soviet enthusiasm and reputation for battlefield ferocity, Washington policymakers saw Turkey as valuable primarily for its airstrips from which U.S. bombers might conduct strikes against Soviet targets and for its strategic location controlling Soviet entry into the eastern Mediterranean. American strategic planners hoped Turkish troops could retard a Soviet attack and lessen the vulnerability of the Persian Gulf and Suez Canal, but most importantly Turkey provided access to important Soviet facilities and delivered a commanding naval position.<sup>120</sup> Such was considered Turkey's importance, particularly in light of Korea, that in 1951 substantial U.S. diplomatic effort took place, resulting to an invitation to Greece and Turkey for joining NATO.<sup>121</sup>

Membership in NATO rendered irrelevant Greek and Turkish national efforts to ensure their security vis-à-vis the Soviet bloc, providing these relatively small states with incentives to ride free on the efforts of their more powerful allies and to shift the focus of their foreign policy from the Soviet threat to their more parochial conflicts. Although President Truman had publicly committed the United States in 1947 to protecting Greece from communist subversion,<sup>122</sup> U.S. national security planners had refused, as late as

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<sup>120</sup> U.S. policymakers gave much less consideration to Greece, in part because they did not foresee Greece, entrenched in a civil war with communist-supported guerrillas, as viably pursuing neutrality. Nevertheless, concessions to Turkish demands necessitated matching commitments to its Aegean neighbor. See Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1969, pp. 569-570.

<sup>121</sup> See Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, The Truman Administration, and the Cold War*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992, pp. 289-290, 419-420.

<sup>122</sup> Initiated by President Harry S. Truman's "Address Before A Joint Session Of Congress," (the famous *Truman Doctrine*), 12 March 1947.

February 1951, to promise a military response in the case of a Soviet bloc attack on Greece.<sup>123</sup> After 1952, with the Atlantic alliance guaranteeing its security, Greece believed itself able to pursue its longtime dream of *enosis* with Cyprus, and, shortly after its accession, the Greek government, which had considered *enosis* its eventual goal but had long resisted domestic pressures for immediate action toward that end, officially endorsed that policy.<sup>124</sup> Had Greece remained outside the alliance, it could hardly have devoted the resources or foreign policy attention to so peripheral an aim. Cyprus began to occupy a central place in the nation's imagination because an outside party had met the core security need.

Like Greece, Turkey had assigned its regional interests a low priority before joining the alliance. Its muted response toward the growing Cypriot clamor for *enosis* had understandably led Greek decision makers to conclude that Turkey was not concerned with the island's future.<sup>125</sup> Moreover, in light of both countries' commitment to the alliance, Greece had not foreseen Turkey's fears of encirclement if Cyprus came under Greek sovereignty. Turkish leaders often cautioned Greece not to press for union, but they invariably paired these warnings with affirmations of abiding Greek-Turkish

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<sup>123</sup> "20. In the Event of an Attack Against Greece. ...In light of the vital interest of the United States in Greece and the deep commitment of United States prestige, the more valid alternative open to the United States in the event of an attack by Soviet and/or satellite would be to provide material and deploy United States forces to the extent necessary and available without jeopardizing the security of the United States or of areas of the world of greater strategic importance to the United States, and to urge all other nations to take similar action." Quoted from Declassified Document NSC 103, *National Security Council: Confidential*, Issue date: 6 February 1951. Date declassified: [No declassification date]. [CD-ROM Id: 1978070100113] Fiche#: 1978-246B, p. 10.

<sup>124</sup> On the *enosis* movement in Greece and the government's complicated postwar relationship with it, see Tozun Bancheli, *Greek-Turkish Relations Since 1955*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990, pp. 28-31 and Richard Barham, *Enosis: From Ethnic Communalism to Greek Nationalism in Cyprus, 1878-1955*, Columbia University, 1982.

<sup>125</sup> See Bancheli, pp. 35-39.

friendship. For example, in 1951 the Turkish foreign minister tempered his remarks by stressing that the issue was harmful “especially at a time when serious threats to the very existence of the free world make it imperative for all free and friendly nations to stand together unreservedly.” As Greece began aggressively pressing its Cyprus agenda in the United Nations in mid-1954, Turkish Prime Minister Menderes was reportedly guilty of speaking critically of Greek foreign policy in public, while privately assuring Greek representatives that Cyprus could not disrupt the bonds between their countries.<sup>126</sup>

Turkey failed to issue clear signals regarding Cyprus, partly because its interests were in flux –that is, its membership in NATO encouraged Turkey, as it had Greece, to consider a more active role in regional affairs. By December 1954 the ambiguity surrounding Turkish feelings had disappeared, and the country’s ambassador to the UN firmly declared that Turkey must be party to any agreement revising the status quo on the island.<sup>127</sup> In 1955, when Britain, in order to balance Greek pressure, offered Turkey a place at the London Tripartite Conference regarding Cyprus, Turkey seized the opportunity. As the meeting came to an inconclusive end, Turkey indicated its intense interest in the island’s fate by engineering destructive anti-Greek riots in Istanbul and Izmir.<sup>128</sup> Paradoxically, their accession to NATO led Greece and Turkey to redefine their interests in ways that strained the alliance commitment, bringing them into tension with each other and with their more powerful allies.

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>128</sup> See Alexis Alexandris, *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations, 1918-1974*, Athens: Center for Asia Minor Studies, 1992.

Two early U.S. efforts to prevent conflict over Cyprus illustrate NATO's curious effects on the pair's foreign policies. In the aftermath of the 1955 riots, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles dispatched identical letters to the two parties, urging them to put aside their differences for the sake of coalition unity and subtly threatening to terminate U.S. assistance, unless they could subordinate their national objectives to the greater good of the free world. The prospect of losing U.S. aid was no doubt terrifying to these weak governments, but their security against Soviet attack remained assured by the North Atlantic Treaty. Although his warnings promised to exact a great cost, Dulles' pleas were dismissed on both sides of the Aegean.

In contrast, during the 1964 crisis, after Turkey had informed the United States that it planned to intervene in the intercommunal warfare ravaging Cyprus, Lyndon Johnson sent Prime Minister Inonu "the most brutal diplomatic note" then Undersecretary of State George Ball had ever seen.<sup>129</sup> Not only did Johnson remind Inonu that the use of U.S.-supplied equipment in such an operation would violate their 1947 military assistance agreement, but he also threatened to deprive Turkey of NATO protection. "I hope you will understand," he wrote his Turkish counterpart, "that your NATO allies have not had a chance to consider whether they have an obligation to protect Turkey against the Soviet Union if Turkey takes a step which results in Soviet intervention without the full consent and understanding of its NATO allies."<sup>130</sup>

Undoubtedly, the threat of the removal of NATO's guarantee was not a quantifiable cost, like perhaps the loss of U.S. aid, but it exposed the nation to the

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<sup>129</sup> George W. Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern: Memoirs*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1982, p. 350.

<sup>130</sup> Quoted from Declassified Document, *Letter, White House. Top Secret*, Issue date: 5 June 1964. Date declassified: 13 August 1996 [CD-ROM Id: 1997050101272] Fiche#: 1997-99, pp. 1-3.

unthinkable –a possible overwhelming Soviet attack, devastation, and the reconstitution of society along the Soviet model. Johnson’s threat forced Turkish decision makers to think like the leaders of a country outside the alliance, and, not surprisingly, Cyprus hardly then seemed a top priority. In contrast with 1974, the United States immediately reacted and used its influence to the maximum extend possible to avoid the imminent crisis that threatened the whole region. Furthermore, the United States took the appropriate measures in case that Turkey tried to accomplish its plan, by mobilizing its forces and directly placing them between the Turkish fleet and Cyprus.<sup>131</sup> Johnson’s letter had the desired effect: invasion, and the broader war that had seemed sure to ensue, were averted.<sup>132</sup>

By the mid-1950s the conflict was perceived as having broader implications for the two states’ security relations. As the dispute over Cyprus wore on, Greek-Turkish relations spiraled downwards in late 1956 and early 1957 as the two countries tangled over the status of the island and the treatment of minorities. Turkish leaders gave voice to their traditional fears of encirclement through Greek control over the Aegean.<sup>133</sup> Meanwhile, in April 1957 the conservative, pro-American Greek premier Constantine Karamanlis angrily told U.S. ambassador George Allen that he had lost patience with

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<sup>131</sup> “From: Department of State; To: Am embassy NICOSIA; ...Carrier Task Force consisting of one carrier, one cruiser, four destroyers will be in position eight hours off Cyprus at 061900Z.” Quoted from Declassified Document, *Telegram, Department Of State. Secret*. Issue date: 5 June 1964. Date declassified: 7 September 1978 [CD-ROM Id: 1978100100263] Fiche#: 1978-399C.

<sup>132</sup> The standard view among scholars is that Johnson’s letter prevented war; see for example Dimitris Constas (ed.), *The Greek-Turkish Conflict in the 1990s: Domestic and External Influences*, London: Macmillan, 1991. However, other scholars maintain different approaches; for example, Theodore Couloumbis in *The United States, Greece, and Turkey: The Troubled Triangle*, New York: Praeger, 1983, maintains that Turkey lacked the training, equipment, and strategic position to conduct an invasion in 1964 and that its capabilities would have permitted only limited air strikes.

<sup>133</sup> Bancheli, pp. 29-34.

Turkish provocations and with its threats to seize Greek islands in the Aegean: consequently “the Greek government was obliged, regardless of the alliances of which it remained a member, to start exploring in what way and through what combinations it could face the contingency of a war with Turkey.”<sup>134</sup>

As early as 1957, the revised Greek threat analysis had crept into U.S. policy statements, which now referred to Greek “suspicions of Turkey and its fear of Turkey’s entrenching itself as the chosen instrument of U.S. policy in the area” and considered Turkey not Greece’s ally, but its “ancient enemy.”<sup>135</sup> The United States recognized that “Greece’s determination to maintain approximate military parity with Turkey has increased as relations over Cyprus have worsened.” Also, “As Greek economic strength and political stability have grown, national self-confidence has increased and Greece has taken a more independent and nationalist role. Greek nationalism has frequently sought, often successfully, to bring within Greece’s frontiers, areas inhabited primarily by ethnic Greeks. This irredentism, behind which the Greek Orthodox Church has generally been the main driving force, has found its principal extension recently on Cyprus problem, and has led to serious inter-allied tensions.”<sup>136</sup> Although the militarization of the eastern Aegean islands has acquired importance only since 1974, Greece first placed troops on those islands, debatably in violation of the Lausanne Treaty, in 1960.<sup>137</sup> Turkish officials have often described the militarized islands as “daggers” pointed at the mainland and

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<sup>134</sup> Stephen G. Xydis, *Cyprus: Conflict and Conciliation, 1954-1958*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1967, pp. 78-79.

<sup>135</sup> Quoted from Declassified Document NSC 5718/1, *U.S. Policy Toward Greece, Transmittal, National Security Council. Secret*. Issue date: 5 August 1957. Date declassified: 10 July 1981. [CD-ROM Id: 1981100100192] Fiche#: 1981-494A.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Bancheli, pp. 146-149.

have portrayed them as launch sites for air strikes, but Greeks counter that they deter Turkish aggression in the Aegean. Within five years of the first Cyprus crisis, Greece had initiated restructuring its military forces to cope with a broad Turkish threat to its national security.<sup>138</sup>

As Greece and Turkey increasingly viewed each other as regional competitors, the alliance's military assistance and training exacerbated their security relations. According to Stearns, a former U.S. ambassador to the region, "The most questionable hypothesis underlying our Greek and Turkish aid programs is . . . the pretense that we have been arming them against an outside threat rather than against each other."<sup>139</sup> Karamanlis voiced his concerns about disproportionate U.S. aid to Turkey as early as October 1955, just a month after the Istanbul riots, when he told to General J. Lawton Collins, the U.S. representative to NATO's Military Committee and Standing Group, that "Many Greeks regard with trepidation the important role Turkey seems to have in Western military and political plans."<sup>140</sup> Even as Greece and Turkey were negotiating a Cyprus settlement, the counselor of the Greek Embassy in Washington complained to a State Department official that Greece was the victim of "favoritism shown towards Turkey in the military preparedness of NATO, in the supply of equipment –above all, naval equipment."<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Monteagle Stearns, *Entangled Allies: U.S. Policy Toward Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1992, p. 43.

<sup>140</sup> Quoted from *Telegram From the Army Attaché in Greece (Strange) to the Department of the Army, 13 October 1955. SECRET*. Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1955-1957, Vol. 24, pp. 547-549. Collins' reply is revealing: first, he averred, war between NATO allies is unthinkable in light of the common Soviet threat, and, second, U.S. aid is unequal because the common defense prescribes different roles for the two countries. However, such arguments hardly reassured Karamanlis.

<sup>141</sup> Quoted from *Memorandum of Conversation, Cavalierato [Counselor of Greek Embassy] and Williams (GTI), 24 March 1958. Secret*. Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1958-1960, Vol.10, part 2, pp. 611-612.

Although Greece understood that the allies were arming Turkey to fulfill alliance tasks, "the Greek people could not help but think of Turkey's growing military strength in terms of her 'unfriendly' attitude towards Greece and the centuries of Greek-Turkish conflict which lay behind it."<sup>142</sup>

By May 1958 U.S. officials acknowledged that "Although Greece has a government which is firmly allied to the West, there has been a gradual decline over the past two years in popular support for NATO.... The lessened popular support is due in part to a decline in the Greek estimate of danger from the Soviet Bloc, to a growing sense of national self-confidence which permits Greece to play a more independent role in foreign affairs, and to Greek reaction to reduced American economic aid levels."<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, by giving Turkey more advanced aircraft (F-100s) than Greece (F-84s) would "aggravate" Greek fears that Turkey was of greater strategic consequence to the United States than Greece—not that the observation had any effect on U.S. assistance levels.<sup>144</sup> Though a detail, it may seem worth to mention here that these particular aircrafts were extensively used during the Turkish invasion in Cyprus (20 July 1974), especially at its second phase (14-17 August 1974) that resulted to the current occupation.<sup>145</sup> Although many years old at that time, the F-100 squadrons were the backbone of the Turkish Air Force and made the difference at the specific operations (*Attila 1 and 2*), perhaps partly because there was nothing available to counter them from

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<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> Quoted from *Operations Cooperating Board Report On Greece, Washington, 14 May 1958. SECRET*. Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1958-1960, Vol. 10, pp. 616-620.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> For more on this issue, see Christopher Hitchens, *Hostage to History: Cyprus from the Ottomans to Kissinger*, New York: Verso Press, 1998, pp. 101-111; Tom Streissgucch, *Cyprus: Divided Island*, Minneapolis, MN: Learner Co, 1998, pp. 72-79.

the Greek-Cypriot side. However, this use was undoubtedly directly in contrast to the spirit of the initial procurement agreement and the exclusively specified “defense purposes” the Americans identified in the late 1950s.

Nevertheless, a few days later of May 1958, the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) again, maintained, “Given the relatively favorable internal security situation in Greece it would seem that a modest U.S. internal security program should be adequate.”

<sup>146</sup> Later that year, the OCB, searching for a way to lower the cost of modernizing Greek forces in accordance with the NATO planning document MC-70, considered the possibility of “reducing those [Greek] national forces which are in excess of MC-70 goals.” However, it also recognized that “Greek political considerations, especially Greek sensitivity regarding the Turkish military position, may cause Greece to resist any proposals to pare its conventional national forces and limit military buildup plans.”<sup>147</sup>

These observations by U.S. leaders and bureaucrats are an indirect, yet particularly powerful, form of evidence. Accustomed to viewing the world through the lens of the Cold War, by a light refracted by their own interests, Americans could not comprehend the nature and depth of the conflict: why, they asked themselves and their troubled allies, could Greece and Turkey not reclaim the spirit of Venizelos and Ataturk? In U.S. officials, who, as it seems, were slow to drop their presuppositions, one finds strong proof that by the late 1950s these allies were also adversaries, for whom distributional

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<sup>146</sup> Quoted from *Operations Cooperating Board Report, Operations Plan For Greece, Washington 21 May 1958. SECRET*. Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1958-1960, Vol. 10, pp. 616-620.

<sup>147</sup> Quoted from *Operations Cooperating Board Report On Greece, Washington, 17 December 1958. SECRET*. Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1958-1960, Vol. 10, pp. 643-649.

questions were critical, and that U.S. policy and alliance military assistance fueled the tensions between them.

The American priorities during the Cold War exacerbated this problem. At first the United States believed that Greece's main security concern was internal and supplied it with an army capable of crushing the communist insurgency and deterring further civil war, while Turkey was armed to resist a direct Soviet attack. Greece was to have sufficient military capacity to slow Soviet bloc forces until NATO reinforcements could arrive.<sup>148</sup> Although Greece initially received greater assistance than Turkey, the resolution of the civil war reversed the pattern. Between 1952, when both states entered NATO, and 1959, when they negotiated a short-lived Cyprus settlement, "Turkey received over twice as much U.S. military assistance as Greece (\$ 1.36 billion to \$ 673.9 million) –a trend that continued throughout the 1960s."<sup>149</sup> Consequently, before 1974, Greece's forces, lacking strong air and naval components, remained little more than a trip wire in case of Soviet attack, whereas Turkey developed a well-rounded force capable of an independent offensive campaign. Insensitive to local tensions because of its focus on the Soviet bloc, the United States –mainly through NATO– created a marked imbalance of power in the Aegean that threatened regional stability. Indeed, Greece's security situation was further complicated by its lack of strategic depth in the east and the north, its long border, and the vulnerability of its Aegean islands, located closer to the Turkish mainland than to its own. Although the offense-defense balance cannot be ascertained

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<sup>148</sup> Besides the various U.S. documents showing this, see Yiannis Roubatis, "The United States and the Operational Responsibilities of the Greek Armed Forces, 1947-1977," *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, Vol. 6, Spring 1979, pp. 39-57.

<sup>149</sup> Theodore A. Couloumbis *The United States, Greece, and Turkey: The Troubled Triangle*, New York: NY, Praeger, 1983, pp. 178-179.

without greater information regarding Greek and Turkish doctrine, it seems plausible that these geographic conditions laid the foundation for the offensive advantage and, combined with the disparities in power, contributed to the region's instability.<sup>150</sup>

Nevertheless, although U.S. executive branch officials long criticized Congress' rough enforcement of the seven-to-ten ratio in assistance to Greece and Turkey, both because it limited the administration's options and because of its arbitrary nature, the 1978 amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 –specifying that U.S. aid to Greece and Turkey should “be designed to insure that the present balance of military strength among countries of the region... is preserved”<sup>151</sup>– brought a greater measure of stability to the area by disbursing aid more evenly than in the past.

Generally, the events of 1950s seem to test the hypothesis regarding favoritism. Greece saw itself as a victim after the 1955 riots, and Greeks viewed Dulles' identical letters to both parties as a betrayal by the United States, since the damage that the Greek minority communities in Istanbul and Izmir was considerable in blood and treasure.<sup>152</sup>

Furthermore, “to add to the frustration of the Greeks, the General Committee of the United Nations voted on September 21, 1955, against the inclusion of the Cyprus issue on the agenda for the fall 1955 session of the General Assembly. Greece's fellow NATO members cast five of the seven votes: the United States, Britain, France, Norway,

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<sup>150</sup> For a more detailed analysis see Athanasios Platias, *Greece's Strategic Doctrine in the Greek-Turkish Conflict in the 1990s: Domestic and External Influences*, edited by Dimitri Constas, London: Macmillan, 1991, pp. 91-108.

<sup>151</sup> 1978 Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, Section 620C(b), Title 22 –Foreign Relations and Intercourse, Par. 2373 (Eastern Mediterranean Policy Requirements, Sec. (a) 4, p. 1040.

<sup>152</sup> “Prime Minister Menderes and other Turkish high-officials were convicted of causing injuries and damage by deliberately inciting riots against Greeks (Yassıada trials, 14 October 1960-15 September 1961),” Couloumbis, p. 39.

and Luxemburg. Voting with the Greeks, ironically, were countries such as Egypt, the Soviet Union, and Poland.”<sup>153</sup>

This move should have resulted in greater Greek identification with alliance objectives and a renewed emphasis on the Soviet threat rather than regional interests. However, precisely the opposite occurred. The perceived abandonment led Greece to pursue a more independent foreign policy, although fear of the Soviet threat persisted, and Greece’s attention to Turkey intensified.

The Cypriot problem has become the dominant issue in Greek politics and foreign policy. It has absorbed the energies of the Greek government, diverted attention from the problems of economic development, and caused the rigidity of Greece’s foreign policy and serious strains with its major allies. The Cyprus question, by sharpening Greek-Turkish distrust, has been a large factor in preventing the development of the Balkan Pact among Greece, Turkey, and Yugoslavia. At present Greece regards the Alliance as potentially important for both military and economic reasons, but claims that it cannot be developed until the Turkish attitude on Cyprus change.<sup>154</sup>

The events of 1955 corrected any Greek misimpression that NATO was interested in collective security rather than simply external deterrence, but Dulles’ letters never undermined the security guarantee and, therefore, never threatened to leave either country to the Soviets. Instead of moderating Greek regional aims and smoothing any divergence between Greek goals and those of the alliance, this weaker form of abandonment exacerbated the conflict by indicating to Greece that the allies, and the most important ally in particular, favored Turkey.

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<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>154</sup> Quoted from Declassified Document NSC 5718/1, *U.S. Policy Toward Greece, Transmittal, National Security Council. Secret*. Issue date: 5 August 1957. Date declassified: 10 July 1981. [CD-ROM Id: 1981100100192] Fiche#: 1981-494A. Also, on the growing divergence between Greek and U.S. policies, see for example *Telegram From the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State, Athens, 12 March 1956. Secret*. FRUS 1955-1957, Vol. 24, pp. 347-348.

Indeed, this favoritism many times was more than obvious, not only to Greek eyes. Where Greece was seen as an uncertain ally in declassified U.S. documents, Turkey was steadfast; where Greece was portrayed as often more concerned about its regional interests than those of the alliance, Turkey was depicted as a loyal ally; where Greek decision makers hinted, or occasionally explicitly identified, the Turkish threat, their Turkish counterparts were resolutely focused on the Soviet Union and its clients.<sup>155</sup>

Perhaps the documents reflect long-standing U.S. prejudices and thus reveal more about U.S. attitudes than about Greek and Turkish policymakers. Perhaps Turkey's leaders were more astute than Greece's leaders, recognizing that fear of an ally would garner less U.S. political, economic, and military support than the common struggle. Although both explanations may contain some truth, the Dulles letters, which implicitly held Turkey blameless, led Turkey to believe that it was more highly valued by the alliance than was its rival. The resultant sense of confidence reinforced the shift in foreign policy focus, translating into an unsurprising aggressiveness in the pursuit of regional aims. Even when U.S. diplomats praised Turkey's loyalty, they simultaneously noted that it was highly "stubborn" on the Cyprus question, refusing to compromise in the tripartite negotiations of the late 1950s.<sup>156</sup> Moreover, given the two countries' roles in alliance plans and the corresponding pattern of assistance, the future of the regional distribution of military power seemed quite promising from a Turkish point of view. In

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<sup>155</sup> For a more detailed analysis of this tendency, see Declassified Document *NSC 5708/2, U.S. Policy Toward Turkey, National Security Council. Secret*. Issue date: 29 January 1958. Date declassified: 21 October 1985. [CDROM Id: 1986050101555] Fiche#: 1986-119; also, *NSC 6015/1, Statement of U.S. Policy Toward Turkey, National Security Council. Secret*. Issue date: 5 October 1960. Date declassified: 17 January 1986. [CDROM Id: 1986070102150] Fiche#: 1986-160.

<sup>156</sup> *Memorandum From the Secretary of State's Special Assistant (Holmes) to the Secretary of State [Dulles], Washington, 30 July 1956. Secret*. FRUS 1955-1957, Vol. 24, pp. 388-391.

short, Turkey believed that the political balance of power was tipped in its favor and that the military balance would soon follow suit. It had relatively little to fear from Greece, which was not likely to approach its allies to complain about aid disbursements. U.S. documents do, then, display a selection bias: Turkish leaders appeared resolutely focused on the Soviet threat because they had no other, and, satisfied with the U.S. tilt in their favor on regional questions, they had little else to discuss besides uncomfortable domestic issues that they preferred to avoid. As someone can argue, more-less the same recipe applies today in Turkey's policy.

### **3. 1974: A Benchmark Year**

The year 1974 was a turning point for U.S. policy towards the two NATO allies. It was a year of extraordinary change and turbulence in Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus. All of the three countries' major Western allies faced the same challenge of responding to the new situation and trying to restore order to the region. The crisis on Cyprus, the subsequent fall of the military regime in Athens and a following downturn in the U.S.-Turkish relations resulting from U.S. reactions to the Turkish response to the Cyprus crisis, all shaped U.S. policy in the years that followed.

The turning point is equally defined by changes in Washington. The fall of Nixon presidency and the resulting surge in congressional activism in foreign policy are equally part of the landscape in which U.S. policy must be viewed. The handling of the 1974 Turkish invasion, was, as we previously stated, the irrefutable proof—not only to the Greeks—of the United States favoritism toward Turkey. It is not in the scope of this thesis to examine in detail the facts and the events surrounding the invasion itself, nor the

arguments presented by the confronted parties for the justification or not of their actions. However, the Cyprus issue is linked with the situation in the Aegean since the basic Aegean disputes began, not surprisingly, after Turkey strengthened its position because of the invasion. More importantly, the Cyprus issue presents valuable evidence of U.S. policy attitudes towards Greece and Turkey.

Generally, the tragic events of 1974 are remembered by Turks as a legal intervention to prevent the bloodbath that in their view was certain to follow the coup attempt. Greeks recall the history as an invasion by the Turkish Army, which seized and still illegally occupies territory of the sovereign nation of Cyprus. Washington, which conceivably could have prevented the brief but costly war, was distracted by the Watergate investigation, and acted too late to do anything except help bring about a cease-fire and freeze in place an unhappy situation. Many Greeks remain convinced that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger encouraged the Greek dictatorship in Athens to pursue the coup against the sometimes left-leaning president of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios. Indeed, much has been written for the role Kissinger played during these events. According to Laipson, the U.S. policy during the 1974 crisis had a more profound effect towards Greece and Turkey for three reasons:

First, the United States was perceived as complicit in the decision of the failing Greek junta to try and oust the troublesome (from their view) Cypriot president, Archbishop Makarios. US signals (or silences) during a period of close US-Greek relations were interpreted as signs of encouragement, in light of Secretary of State Kissinger's reported views on Makarios, and his strategic approach to regional conflicts. Secondly, the failure of US crisis mediation either to prevent the Turkish military action or to bring about its quick withdrawal after a civilian government was restored in Nicosia is deeply imprinted in Greek-Cypriot political

consciousness as evidence of US approval of Turkey's actions, or, as some more reluctantly concede, US impotence to alter Turkey's policy.<sup>157</sup>

However, although most scholars charge the United States accountable for the Cyprus crisis, while some of them disagree on the degree or the share of the responsibility, new approaches have come to light recently –interesting enough to worth mentioning. For example, O'Malley and Craig<sup>158</sup> seek to show that 1974 was no defeat for the United States. Rather, it was the realization of a long-standing plan to save its strategic assets on the island (top-secret defense and spying facilities) from what U.S. officials feared might be a left-wing takeover if the crisis in Cyprus were not resolved. Cyprus, the authors believe, had become priceless to Washington for monitoring both Soviet nuclear missile activity in Central Asia and potential military threats in the Middle East. Ongoing instability threatened these assets, thus, by mounting an invasion, Turkey saved them.

Indeed, the strategic importance of Cyprus for the United States is evident as early as 1961: "Since Cyprus real estate and strategic location are of *considerable importance* to us and to our allies, I would be grateful if the Department of State would advise me of what measures would best *insure our holding on to it*, including *whatever need* of US resources may be required. –[signed] John F. Kennedy"<sup>159</sup> [Emphasis added].

The arguments they tell explodes what they see as at least three myths about the events of 1974: that they were the necessary result of the deep ethnic divisions within

<sup>157</sup> Helen Laipson, *US Policy Towards Greece and Turkey Since 1974*, in the *Greek-Turkish Conflict in the 1990s: Domestic and External Influences*, edited by Dimitri Constas, London: Macmillan, 1991, p.165

<sup>158</sup> Brendan O'Malley and Ian Craig, *The Cyprus Conspiracy: America, Espionage, and the Turkish Invasion*, London-New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999.

<sup>159</sup> Quoted from Declassified Document NSC Action Memorandum No. 71, *From White House To Secretary of State. Secret*. Issue date: 22 August 1961. Date declassified: 22 September 1992. [CD-ROM Id: 1993070101873] Fiche#: 1993-161.

Cyprus itself, that the United States played the role of honest broker between its NATO allies Turkey and Greece, and that the division of the island represented something of a setback for American foreign policy. Characteristically, Max Cox reviewing the arguments made by the authors wrote:

One man in particular emerges as villain: former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. The book takes Kissinger to task not just for misrepresenting the 1974 crisis in his memoirs (a somewhat naive charge to those familiar with Kissinger's various efforts to rewrite his own role in history) but for being one of the main architects of the Turkish intervention itself. The authors maintain that, deeply worried as Kissinger was at the time about NATO's southern flank and the various political threats it faced in countries such as Italy and Greece, he put "no credible pressure" on Turkey "not to go ahead with an invasion." He then did "everything" he could "*to help the Turks make up their mind that intervention was the only way they could get satisfaction.*" And having quietly encouraged the Turks to invade, while systematically "ignoring the advice of his own experts," he played what even the Turks called a "*constructive and helpful role*" by not protesting the invasion and the subsequent division of the island.

*Perhaps the only people who will not be surprised by all this are Greek Americans and the Greeks themselves. They have always suspected there was a conspiracy and have always insisted that Turkey could not have acted alone.* As Makarios put it just after the Turkish attack: "The United States is the only country which could have exerted pressure on Turkey and prevented the invasion." Radical Greek feeling was summed up even more forcefully at the time by Andreas Papandreou. The later-to-be Greek prime minister was overcome with anger at the way in which "the U.S. and NATO" had "handed over Cyprus" to Turkey. But this was no spontaneous event. "This was blueprinted long ago in the Pentagon and the CIA," he maintained. Indeed, as far back as 1967, he had suspected that the Americans wanted partition of Cyprus and would use the Turks to achieve it.

The charge itself is not entirely original. *Nor is it so incredible either. After all, the United States always tended to tilt toward the more powerful and more stable Turkey over Greece;* and there is evidence—though much of it circumstantial—to support the argument that Kissinger not only knew about Turkish plans to invade Cyprus (*hardly surprising given the close relationship between the United States and Turkey*) but might have tacitly approved. The main worry for him, it appears, was not

so much the fate of Cyprus but the prospect of a direct conflict between Greece and Turkey as a result of the crisis in 1974.

But there was still fallout, especially with the British. Deeply disturbed by the Turkish action, at one point London considered placing part of its own fleet between Cyprus and Turkey to deter the Turks. However, according to a leading British policy maker at the time, "*the Americans vetoed the action.*" It would even appear that Britain proposed "joint military action" with Washington: *Again, the United States refused to do anything.*<sup>160</sup> [Emphasis added].

No matter the validity of the above statements presented –with crucial, sometimes, evidence, we have to confess– by the authors, the Cyprus issue is of special importance since inevitably marks a turning point of the U.S. policy towards Greece and Turkey, and dramatically affects those countries foreign policies thereafter.

## B. POST-1974 ERA

### 1. Rivalry in NATO

Although scholars generally maintain that alliances, institutions and various links in general promote cooperation and normalization of the disputes among nations, observers of the Greek-Turkish conflict have noted their drawbacks. In the words of one, "Instead of enabling them [Greece and Turkey] to reconcile their differences by direct negotiation, their common alliance with the United States and Western Europe often appears to act as an impediment. Bilateral disputes acquire a multilateral dimension."<sup>161</sup> Coufoudakis has advised, "An attempt should be made to decouple some of the issues

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<sup>160</sup> Max Cox, *Foreign Policy*, Winter 1999-2000.

<sup>161</sup> Monteagle Stearns, *Entangled Allies: U.S. Policy Toward Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1992, p. 5.

and to seek solutions to problems that appear to be manageable.”<sup>162</sup> However, not only did U.S. policy –and, consequently, NATO– help revive the inactive Greek-Turkish dispute at the height of the Cold War, but also its famous mechanisms of reconciliation have served to intensify the disputes. Indeed, rather than treat the multiple issue areas the alliance has brought together as an opportunity to exchange concessions, the two countries have, in their quest for bargaining leverage and out of fear of establishing a reputation for weakness, sought to manipulate these linkages to their political and strategic advantage, broadening the conflict and producing escalating levels of tension.

Institutions, as centers of power, themselves become the object of struggle as rivals seek to capture their forums and mechanisms. Until the 1980 coup, Turkey sought to parlay its exclusive presence in NATO’s military wing into bargaining power. Conscious of the alliance’s utility as a political tool, both parties have at times remained in NATO less out of a commitment to its fundamental goals than because membership allows them more effectively to mobilize political support on key issues and to prevent collective NATO decisions that would undermine their respective positions. As one Turkish analyst bluntly explained, “If Turkey were not a member of NATO, or had she left NATO while Greece remained a member of the alliance, this would tip the power balance in favor of Greece and weaken the Turkish stand on Cyprus,” since “the Western powers would necessarily endorse the Greek position.”<sup>163</sup> Speaking on the floor of the Greek Parliament in 1987, Papandreu similarly averred, “We shall not withdraw from

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<sup>162</sup> Van Coufoudakis, “Greek-Turkish Relations, 1973-1983: The View From Athens,” *International Security*, Vol. 9 (4), p. 215.

<sup>163</sup> Mehmet Gonlubol, *NATO, USA, and Turkey in Turkey’s Foreign Policy in Transition, 1950-1974*, edited by Kemal H. Karpat, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975, pp. 48-49.

NATO because our country's security dangers within the Washington-Ankara-Athens triangle will be deadly."<sup>164</sup> Indeed, the following incidents illustrate our initial argument.

Since 1977, Turkey used its veto to block Greece's reentry into the military wing of NATO—the latter had withdrawn after NATO refused to take action in its defense in 1974—insisting that Greece's re-incorporation must be contingent on the negotiation of new operational control responsibilities in the Aegean. As we previously stated, Turkey hoped to revise the pre-1974 arrangements, which had given Greece responsibility for the bulk of the Aegean and, simply put it, split the sea and airspace down the middle.

Greece objected that such an arrangement would leave Turkey responsible for the security of hundreds of Greek islands, and thus undoubtedly was unacceptable for its sovereign rights. Several plans put forward by NATO Supreme Commander Europe (SACEUR) Alexander Haig and then Bernard Rogers were denied for various reasons from both sides.<sup>165</sup> After the military takeover in 1980, Turkey withdrew its demand, and Greek reentry was allowed to precede the renegotiation.

On coming to power in 1981, Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou pressured NATO for a guarantee of Greece's eastern borders, and at the 1981 defense ministerial he insisted that the communiqué acknowledge Greece's position that Turkey posed the greatest threat to its security. When the alliance refused, Papandreou blocked the issuance of a joint communiqué, the first time a ministerial had ever failed to produce such a

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<sup>164</sup> Charles W. McCaskill, "U.S.-Greek Relations and the Problems of the Aegean and Cyprus," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, Vol. 16 (2), 1988, p. 216.

<sup>165</sup> U.S. Senate (Hans Binnendijk and Alfred Friendly), *Turkey, Greece, and NATO: The Strained Alliance*, Washington: Committee on Foreign Relations, 1980, pp. 59-61.

document.<sup>166</sup> Moreover, at the 1982 meeting of the NATO ministerial council, Papandreou personally handed out a memorandum detailing Turkish infringements of Greek airspace.

Turkey has objected to Greece's militarization of Lemnos, near the strategic choke point of the Dardanelle, and has successfully excluded the island from NATO exercises. Consequently, Greece has regularly boycotted allied military maneuvers in the Aegean since its return to NATO in 1981 and, although nominally reintegrated into the alliance's military wing, has not assumed an active role in its expected primary area of operations. As a consequence of the Lemnos impasse, Greece and Turkey did not for several years formally commit troops to NATO, and Greek forces did not participate in any NATO maneuvers in 1986 (they had previously taken part in exercises outside the Aegean).<sup>167</sup> However, this case is still under progress after the new NATO Command structure (see Figure 3) and NATO's decision for the establishment of four new sub-regional headquarters in Madrid, Verona, Larisa, and Izmir (see Figure 4).

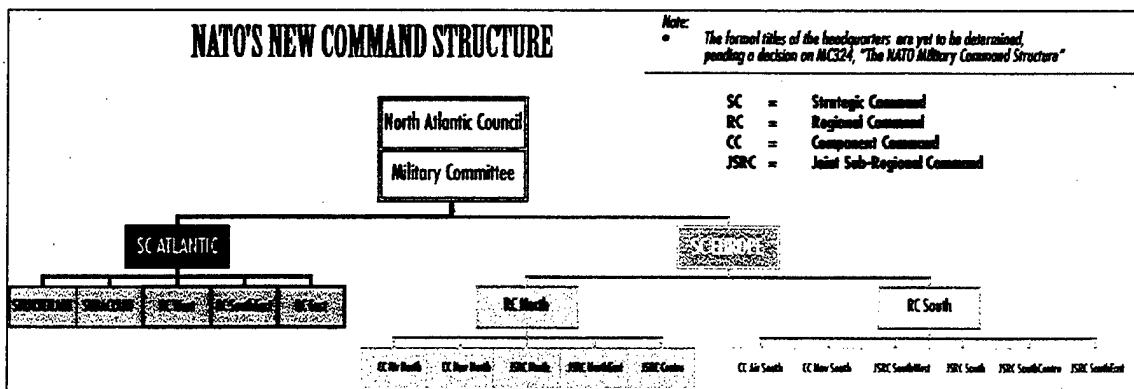


Figure 3. New Command Structure: Organization Chart (Source: *NATO Archives*)

<sup>166</sup> Thanos Veremis, *Greek Security: Issues and Politics in Greece and Turkey –Adversity in Alliance*, Aldershot: Gower, p. 37.

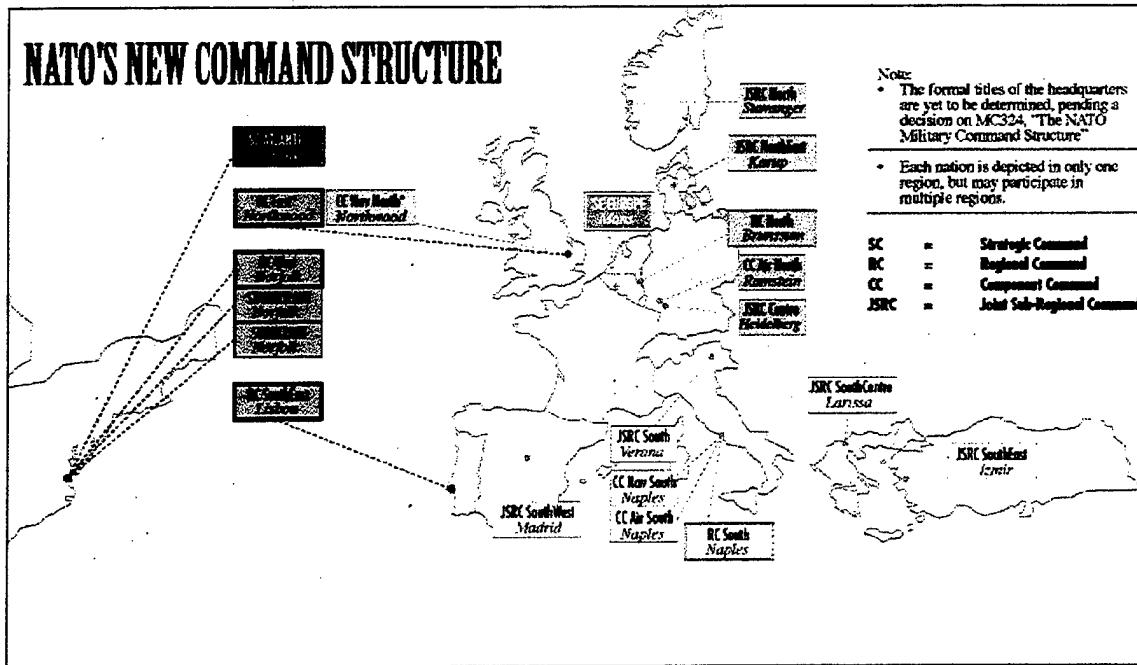


Figure 4. Map of NATO's New Command Structure (Source: *NATO Archives*)

Nevertheless, the end of Cold War brought some changes to the spectrum of the Greek-Turkish confrontation within NATO frame, as for example the settlement of the operational control limits. During Cold War, NATO had converted Greece and Turkey to containment politic-military tools against the Warsaw Pact. This frame allowed, up to a point, both countries to press the alliance for each side's advantageous settlement of military activities in general. On the other hand, the bipolar world had as an indirect effect for the Greek-Turkish rivalry to be considered as a phenomenon that could not exceed specific limits and, thus, could not damage the alliance's credibility. Moreover, the rivalry itself during this period helped the United States to invoke it as an excuse, in order to remain inactive or neutral over specific vital (for Greece and Turkey) issues.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 56-61.

Thus, there was not any actual problem in terms of NATO's credibility and deterrent capability.

For up to seventeen years (1980-1997), there was a struggle between Greece and Turkey within NATO for the issue of the operational control limits;<sup>168</sup> the dispute was if the determination of the operational control (new or as pre-1974) must precede the establishment of the new sub-regional headquarters of Larisa and Izmir. However, the NATO's new command structure<sup>169</sup> determines that "the south Joint Sub-Regional Commands (JSRC), in contrast with the north JSRC, will not have operational control limits. In case of the conduct of air-naval exercises, maneuvers, and operations, the American Commander of RC South (Naples) will provide the operational control boundaries to the JSRC depended on a case by case situation and the planned military activities."<sup>170</sup> Indeed, this seems to be the case: "The flexible approach taken with respect to command and control (C2) measures, such as *boundaries, coordination lines and phasing*, which will greatly facilitate the conduct of exercises and operations. For example, in SC Europe, in peacetime, only those C2 measures necessary for the conduct of SC-level and RC-wide daily, peacetime operations will need to be permanently employed and/or established. *Consequently, there is no requirement for permanently established boundaries below RC level in SC Europe.*"<sup>171</sup> [Emphasis added].

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<sup>168</sup> Kentrotis, p 111; U.S. Senate (Hans Binnendijk and Alfred Friendly), p. 60.

<sup>169</sup> "NATO's Military Committee (MC) proposed a new military command structure to Defense Ministers on 2 December 1997. Ministers agreed to this new command structure as a whole and, in particular, on the type, number and location of headquarters." *NATO Review*, No. 1, Spring 1998, p. 10.

<sup>170</sup> Kentrotis, p 111.

<sup>171</sup> *NATO Review*, No. 1, Spring 1998, pp. 13-14.

Therefore, especially under the current NATO expansion phase, Greece and Turkey inevitably comply with this conception, mostly because of fear that actually there is no alternative; otherwise, both countries will be isolated while other new members will promote their position within the alliance. In Aegean, NATO will consider all the Greek-Turkish and the interim international airspace of the region as a whole. This NATO practice in Aegean had its logic during the Cold War period, where the common space was necessary for the conduct of operations and the defense in general against a possible Warsaw Pact attack. In contrast, in the post-Cold War period this common space seems not so vital for defense purposes, since the common threat is missing now. Therefore, each country's efforts to well define its operation control limits comes as an inevitable consequent. The Greek-Turkish disputes now should seem more "reasonable," since the general insecurity of the international environment further escalates the bilateral disputes. However, the Greek-Turkish disputes over the Aegean during the post-Cold War era do not provide any assurance to the single remained super-power, and, thus, the settlements of "non-existence" or vague national borders between Greece and Turkey is, undoubtedly, a convenient solution.

## 2. EU

Nor has this competition been limited to NATO: Greece and Turkey have engaged in similar behavior in other international organizations. Since Greece joined the European Community (EC) in 1981, the then-EC has repeatedly condemned Turkey's recognition of the independent Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, and the European Parliament has adopted a resolution warning that "the unlawful occupation of part of the

territory of a country associated with the community (i.e., the Republic of Cyprus) by the military forces of another country, also associated with the Community (i.e., Turkey), presents a major stumbling block to the normalization of relations with the latter, viz. Turkey.”<sup>172</sup> The EC listed the continuing Greek-Turkish and Cyprus conflicts as among the reasons for its refusal to consider Turkey’s 1989 application. Turkish officials maintain that Greece has successfully exploited its monopoly in the EC arena to garner political support in its bilateral dispute, and its capacity to block Turkish entry into the Community (and later the EU), has provided it with a powerful lever with which to wring concessions from Turkey.<sup>173</sup> To the aftermath of the Imia/Kardak crisis, EU again adopted a resolution criticizing the Turkish actions:

The European Parliament

- A. Having regard to *Turkey’s provocative military operations* in relation to the isle of Imia in the Eastern Aegean,
- B. Concerned about the dangers of over-reaction if this dispute continues,
- C. Having regard to *Turkey’s official statements making territorial claims and contesting the sovereign rights of an EU Member State*,
- D. Whereas *the islet of Imia belongs to the Dodecanese group of islands*, on the basis of the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, the Protocol between Italy and Turkey of 1932 and the Paris Treaty of 1947, and whereas even on Turkish maps from the 1960s, these islets are shown as Greek territory,
- E. Whereas this action by Turkey *forms part of a broader policy of questioning the status quo in the Aegean....*

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<sup>172</sup> Quoted from Charalambos Tsardanidis, “The European Community and the Cyprus Problem Since 1974,” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, Vol. 16, Fall 1988, pp. 155-157.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 161-164.

1. Gravely concerned by the *dangerous violation by Turkey of sovereign rights of Greece*, a Member State of the European Union and by the build-up of military tension in the Aegean; [Emphasis added].<sup>174</sup>

These frictions along the Turkish path to membership reached a crisis in 1997. In July the EU Commission's "Agenda 2000" report on enlargement treated Turkey differently from the other candidates and sharpened EU language on its prerequisites for membership.<sup>175</sup> The authoritative EU summit, meeting as the European Council in Luxembourg December 12 and 13, confirmed in the Presidency Conclusions the adverse trends in relations with Turkey by explicitly excluding Turkey from the next round of accession negotiations, while at the same time including Cyprus along with five Central and East European nations. It also carried forward stronger criticisms of Turkish policies, such as Greek-favored phrasing that future strengthening of ties with the EU "depends on" Ankara's support for UN negotiations on Cyprus.<sup>176</sup> The leaders of Turkey and Turkish Cyprus reacted immediately and furiously to the Luxembourg summit. Turkish Prime Minister Yilmaz in a press conference on December 14 accused the EU of building "a new cultural Berlin Wall" to shut out Turkey and pledged to end political dialogue with the Union.<sup>177</sup>

However, as we already have mentioned, the Helsinki Summit in December 1999 has dramatically changed this climate, and Turkey accepted as a candidate member with

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<sup>174</sup> "EU Resolution, Adopted by a vote of 342 for, 21 against, 11 abstentions on February 15, 1996 on the provocative actions and contestation of sovereign rights by Turkey against a Member State of the Union." [Available Online: <http://www.mfa.gr/foreign/bilateral/europ.htm>].

<sup>175</sup> *Agenda 2000*, Communication of the European Commission, DOC 97/6, Strasbourg, 15 July 1997.

<sup>176</sup> *Luxembourg European Council, 12 and 13 December 1997, Presidency Conclusions*, DOC/97/24 Luxembourg, 13 December 1997, European Council.

<sup>177</sup> Lee Hockstader and Kelly Couturier "Ankara Ready to Sever European Ties," *Washington Post*, 15 December 1997, p. A22.

Greece's concession. Indeed, the EU has long been seen as the strongest potential catalyst for Greek-Turkish reconciliation, and current events seem to justify this argument.

### 3. Military Balance and Arms Race

As members of the same alliance, Greece and Turkey have had fairly accurate knowledge regarding their respective military capabilities. As expected, however, such transparency has not been sufficient to promote cooperation. Matters instead turned on intentions –on how one expected the other would use its armed forces. In the absence of reassuring information regarding Turkey's goals, Greece viewed superior Turkish military capacity as a real threat, and unequal alliance arms transfers were understandably troubling. When trust reigns, when one can safely assume that the other has benign motives for the foreseeable future, disparities in capabilities are hardly a menace.

Although Turkish decision makers have proclaimed their country's status quo orientation, the combination of Greek presuppositions and the previously mentioned evidence regarding the "virtual war" that takes place in a permanent basis in Aegean, has conspired to generate anxiety in the Greek camp. Reasonably then, Turkish premier Ecevit's 1978 declaration that his country's national security is "primarily dependent on good relations and on establishing an atmosphere of mutual confidence with all our neighbors"<sup>178</sup> was dismissed by Greeks as meaningless rhetoric, as they recalled, for example, Minister of Defense Sancar's explicitly revisionist 1975 statement: "In the Aegean Sea the balance is obviously in Turkey's favor. This is true to such an extent that

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<sup>178</sup> *To Vima*, 24 September 1984

the eyes and thoughts of the Turks, former inhabitants of the islands, remain focused on islands a few miles from the Turkish coast, in hope of being able to reestablish themselves there one day.”<sup>179</sup>

Therefore, as we demonstrated in the previous chapter, one can easily maintain that the power distribution between Greece and Turkey becomes a crucial factor, directly affecting those countries’ policies. Reviewing the arms balance since World War II we observe the following findings:

- Until the mid-1950s, while Turkey was equally armed with Greece and none of both countries had an obvious advantage over the other, its policy towards the Cyprus issue was much more “elastic,” although Greece’s enosis policy was apparently against its interests.
- After the mid-1950s and in the 1960s, once Turkey became superior because the United States had already assigned it a more important role (to directly confront the Soviet threat, while Greece’s forces were mainly for “internal security purposes”), its policy towards the Cyprus issue –and, consequently, toward Greece– became much more aggressive and only then manifested its actual interests.
- In the 1970s, Turkey displayed its superiority and challenged Greece in almost every possible way: Cyprus invasion, provocative behavior in Aegean (the trips of *Candarli, Hora* and *Sizmik 1* over the claimed by Greece continental shelf), and, generally, this period was the starting point of almost all of the Aegean disputes.

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<sup>179</sup> Andrew Wilson, *The Aegean Dispute*, Adelphi Paper No. 155, London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1979, p. 129.

- In the 1980s, when Greece balanced this Turkish superiority, especially in the airpower where it had a quality advantage over Turkey,<sup>180</sup> and equal in the naval power, the Turkish challenges declined. Indeed, in the 1987 crisis, where Turkey announced that it would conduct another “survey” trip over the disputed continental shelf, Greece responded by declaring this action a *casus belli* and mobilized its forces; finally Turkey cancelled the survey.
- In the 1990s, once Turkey again regained the superiority,<sup>181</sup> especially over the air, responded with the Imia/Kardak crisis in 1996, the disputed status of the island of Gavdos, the famous “gray zones” in the Aegean with other direct claims over Greece’s sovereign rights,<sup>182</sup> and the unofficial declaration of the “virtual war” over the Aegean described in the previous chapter.

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<sup>180</sup> “A review of the Aegean military balance in 1980 shows that there appears to be a fairly stable balance. While the ground balance may favor Turkey in a sustained campaign, the air balance now appears to favor Greece. Since the 1974 Cyprus invasion, Greece has purchased new F-4s, A-7s, and Mirage F-1s. By contrast, Turkey has purchased new only F-4s, and many of its older aircraft are becoming obsolete. The Aegean naval balance is also fairly equal as both countries have a roughly equal number of major naval combat vessels.” U.S. Senate (Hans Binnendijk and Alfred Friendly), *Turkey, Greece, and NATO: The Strained Alliance*, Washington: Committee on Foreign Relations, 1980, p. 20.

<sup>181</sup> For a more detailed analysis for the current military balance between Greece and Turkey, see *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment – Procurement: Greece*, 2 May 2000, and *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment – Procurement: Turkey*, 12 May 2000 [updated every four months].

<sup>182</sup> Besides the Imia/Kardak and Gavdos incidents, many others have occurred without escalating to a crisis. However, their significance remains the same for our assertions. For example, “The tense relationship with Turkey suffered a further serious setback when members of a Greek civilian sailing club threatened to raise a large Greek flag on the disputed island of Agathonisi (Esek) south of Samos near Turkey’s coast in May 1999, following a similar crisis over another Aegean island. *The island has a population of 200, a school and a church and its Greek citizens have full voting rights.* After this incident, Greek diplomat D. Koumanakos was summoned to the Foreign Ministry in Ankara on 27 May and was told that Turkey believed the island was *among territories not formally under Greek sovereignty, which constitute a ‘gray area’ with what Turkey describes as ‘undetermined ownership’*. The flag raising was planned for 30 May, but was then postponed to the next day. Permission for the flag raising was given by the Greek Defense Ministry, Greek reports said.” [Emphasis added]. Quoted from “External Affairs – Greece,” *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment*, Eastern Mediterranean - Update 8, 17 April 2000.

From the above findings we can easily become aware of the direct analogy and the links between the provocative actions –or the challenges in general– and the military balance, thus, we can safely maintain that, once there is a military imbalance favoring Turkey, the latter uses its military superiority in pursuit of its policy's objectives. Consequently, it becomes apparent that the military balance in the Aegean is a crucial factor for this region's stability.

The importance of the military balance in the Aegean is early discussed by many scholars. The report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, conducted by the U.S. Senate in 1980, contains, to our view, a very revealing judgment: “The current military balance between Greece and Turkey, therefore, provides *some stability* in the area because neither side has a preponderance of power. *One important consideration of U.S. military aid to the region should be not to disturb this stable bilateral balance while in pursuit of broader NATO goals.*”<sup>183</sup> [Emphasis added]. It is important to remember that the military balance at the time of this report favored Turkey in the ground, Greece in the air, and neither side at sea.

However, U.S. policy and “broader NATO goals” dramatically altered this situation over the following years. Currently, both countries struggle over a never-ended arms race pursuing the precious military superiority, each side for its own reasons. Turkey, though the plethora of economic problems that faces, recently announced a colossal procurement plan for the next ten years. “In April 1997, Turkey outlined a 10-year defense procurement program worth US\$31 billion. A major aim will be to reduce

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<sup>183</sup> U.S. Senate (Hans Binnendijk and Alfred Friendly), *Turkey, Greece, and NATO: The Strained Alliance*, Washington: Committee on Foreign Relations, 1980, p. 20.

reliance on foreign arms suppliers by developing Turkey's domestic industry....[also] Turkey has announced that it intends to spend around US\$150 billion on procurement over the next 25 to 30 years.”<sup>184</sup> Turkish plans also include the creation of a “blue water” navy, in order to increase the current slight edge it has over the Hellenic Navy.<sup>185</sup> On the other hand, Greece tries to keep pace with its rival. “As the largest recipient of funds under Greece's current five-year procurement plan, the Hellenic Air Force (HAF) has been able to conclude a number of key equipment acquisitions this year. It has also launched several longer-term programs designed to try to keep pace with Turkey.... Athens' announcement this year of its plans to receive 60-90 Eurofighter Typhoons marks the first potential sale of the design beyond consortium members Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK.”<sup>186</sup> To demonstrate the priority that Ankara gives to this issue over the critical economic condition (for example, the three-figures inflation rates of the 1990s) it faces since the post-World War II period, I will use some economic indicators. In 1955, the official exchange rate between the U.S. dollar (USD) and the Turkish lira (TL) was 1 USD to 2.8 TL, and this 1 to 2.8 ratio kept until 1958 (although the “free market” ratio was 1 USD to 7.85 TL in 1955, growing to 1 USD to 11.75 TL by 1958).<sup>187</sup> In Greece, the official exchange rate was 1 USD to 12 Drachmae (DR) and 1 USD to 18 DR in the respective years (there was no “free market” ratio in Greece). By the year 1974, the

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<sup>184</sup> “World Armies –Turkey,” *Jane's World Armies*, 18 June 1999.

<sup>185</sup> “While keeping a wary eye on fellow NATO neighbor and rival Greece, the Turkish Navy is becoming stronger and adopting the posture of a potential ‘blue water’ navy.” From “Turkey Greets Genesis Of A ‘Blue Water’ Fleet,” *Jane's Navy International*, Vol. 105, No. 4, 1 May 2000.

<sup>186</sup> From “Greek Air Expansion Plans Aim To Keep Pace With Turkey,” *Jane's Defense Weekly*, Vol. 32, No. 20, 17 November 1999. Moreover, “Greece Will Buy 50 New F-16C/Ds,” *International Defense Review*, Vol. 32, No. 6, 1 June 2000.

<sup>187</sup> Data from Declassified Document NSC 5708, *U.S. Policy Toward Turkey*, National Security Council Confidential, Issue date: 29 January 1958. Date declassified: 21 October 1985. [CD-ROM Id: 1986050101555] Fiche#: 1986-119, p. 7.

official exchange rate was 1 USD to 14 TL to 28 DR (thus, there was a 1 TL to 2 DR ratio until then).<sup>188</sup> However, during the 1990s, we observe the following exchange rates:

- Turkish liras (TL) per USD –331,400 (January 1999), 260,724 (1998), 151,865 (1997), 81,405 (1996), 45,845 (1995), 29,608 (1994)
- Drachmae (DR) per USD –278 (January 1999), 295 (1998), 273 (1997), 240 (1996), 231 (1995), 242 (1994)<sup>189</sup>

Therefore, the 1 TL to 2 DR ratio that existed until 1974, not only inverted, but also became 1 DR to 1,192 TL up to 1999. Thus, the Turkish lira was devaluated 2,384 times more than the Greek drachmae during the last 25 years. Besides these cruel facts, the defense expenditures of Greece and Turkey show, once again, the special importance both countries assign to their military balance. Within NATO, Greece and Turkey steadily score to the first places among the alliance members (see Table 2).

| Country / Pays  | Defence expenditures as % of gross domestic product |                               |                               |                               |            |            |            |            |            |
|---|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|   | Average / Moyenne 1975 - 1979                       | Average / Moyenne 1980 - 1984 | Average / Moyenne 1985 - 1989 | Average / Moyenne 1990 - 1994 | 1994       | 1995       | 1996       | 1997       | 1998       |
| (0)   | (1)   | (2)                           | (3)                           | (4)                           | (5)        | (6)        | (7)        | (8)        | (9)        |
| Based on current prices / Sur la base des prix courants |   |                               |                               |                               |            |            |            |            |            |
| Bulgaria  | 3.2   | 3.3                           | 2.8                           | 2.0                           | 1.7        | 1.6        | 1.6        | 1.5        | 1.5        |
| Denmark   | 2.4   | 2.4                           | 2.0                           | 1.9                           | 1.8        | 1.7        | 1.7        | 1.7        | 1.6        |
| France  | 3.8   | 4.1                           | 3.8                           | 3.5                           | 3.3        | 3.1        | 3.0        | 3.0        | 2.8        |
| Germany   | 3.4   | 3.4                           | 3.0                           | 2.2                           | 1.8        | 1.7        | 1.7        | 1.6        | 1.5        |
| Greece  | 5.6   | 5.4                           | 5.1                           | 4.4                           | 4.4        | 4.4        | 4.5        | 4.6        | 4.8        |
| Italy   | 2.1   | 2.1                           | 2.3                           | 2.1                           | 2.0        | 1.8        | 1.9        | 2.0        | 2.0        |
| Luxembourg  | 0.9   | 1.1                           | 1.0                           | 0.9                           | 0.9        | 0.8        | 0.8        | 0.9        | 0.9        |
| Netherlands   | 3.1   | 3.1                           | 2.9                           | 2.4                           | 2.1        | 2.0        | 2.0        | 1.9        | 1.8        |
| Norway  | 2.8   | 2.7                           | 2.9                           | 2.8                           | 2.6        | 2.4        | 2.2        | 2.1        | 2.1        |
| Portugal  | 3.4   | 3.0                           | 2.8                           | 2.7                           | 2.6        | 2.7        | 2.5        | 2.5        | 2.4        |
| Spain   | ..  | 2.3                           | 2.2                           | 1.7                           | 1.5        | 1.5        | 1.5        | 1.4        | 1.3        |
| Turkey  | 4.4   | 4.0                           | 3.3                           | 3.2                           | 4.1        | 3.9        | 4.1        | 4.1        | 4.4        |
| United Kingdom  | 4.9   | 5.2                           | 4.5                           | 3.8                           | 3.4        | 3.1        | 3.0        | 2.8        | 2.7        |
| <b>NATO - Europe</b>                                    | <b>..</b>   | <b>3.6</b>                    | <b>3.2</b>                    | <b>2.7</b>                    | <b>2.4</b> | <b>2.3</b> | <b>2.3</b> | <b>2.2</b> | <b>2.2</b> |
| Canada  | 1.9   | 2.1                           | 2.1                           | 1.9                           | 1.8        | 1.6        | 1.5        | 1.3        | 1.2        |
| United States   | 5.0   | 5.7                           | 6.2                           | 4.9                           | 4.3        | 4.0        | 3.7        | 3.5        | 3.3        |
| <b>North America</b>                                    | <b>4.7</b>  | <b>5.4</b>                    | <b>5.9</b>                    | <b>4.6</b>                    | <b>4.1</b> | <b>3.8</b> | <b>3.5</b> | <b>3.4</b> | <b>3.2</b> |
| <b>NATO - Total</b>                                     | <b>..</b>   | <b>4.6</b>                    | <b>4.7</b>                    | <b>3.6</b>                    | <b>3.3</b> | <b>3.0</b> | <b>2.9</b> | <b>2.8</b> | <b>2.7</b> |

**Table 2. NATO Defense Expenditures as % of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). (Source: *NATO Archives*)**

<sup>188</sup> "Drachmae Currency Exchange Rates Since 1945," *Hellenic National Bank*, Athens, 1999.

<sup>189</sup> *CIA, World Fact Book 1999 -Turkey, Greece* [Available Online:

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/gr.html>,  
<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/tu.html>]

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

Even in 1980, many years before the confrontation in Aegean reveals its real potential (as it became apparent, for example, in the 1996 Imia/Kardak incident or the “virtual war” previously mentioned), analysts concluded that “while most Americans regard Cyprus as the most acute problem in Greek-Turkish relations, officials in both countries believe that the stakes are much higher in the Aegean.”<sup>190</sup> However, U.S. policy makers never seriously took into consideration the plethora of warnings over this issue. Indeed, “American efforts to reduce tensions between Greece and Turkey are counterproductive over the long-term if they fail to resolve specific issues and simply buy time.”<sup>191</sup> And this seems to be the case in the Greek-Turkish dispute over the Aegean nowadays. However, it is equally important to avoid several simplistic conclusions. I am not arguing that Greece and Turkey would not have clashed over Aegean in the absence of U.S. policy decisions or in the absence of NATO. My argument is that the United States created a marked imbalance of power in the Aegean that indirectly threatened the regional stability and affected those countries policies’ goals in the long run, initially because of its focus on the Soviet Bloc.

In the previous chapters, we showed the relation between the Greek-Turkish challenges and the U.S. policy, and in what aspects the latter affected the former. United States and NATO objectives, initiated by the Cold War priorities, transformed during time the regional policies of Greece and Turkey. Furthermore, these priorities created an

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<sup>190</sup> U.S. Senate (Hans Binnendijk and Alfred Friendly), *Turkey, Greece, and NATO: The Strained Alliance*, Washington: Committee on Foreign Relations, 1980, p. 3 [summary].

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p.57.

imbalance in Aegean, and, consequently, Turkish objectives became wider in spectrum. Indeed, the appearance of Aegean disputes after 1973 and the gradual transformation of Turkish policy, testify to the enduring Turkish revisionism.

This revisionism was increased by the wrong messages sent by the United States. The favoritism from the perceived strategic importance of Turkey greatly contributed to the latter's actions, while the famous policy of evenhandedness came to justify its subsequent injustices. Even in the worse moments of the U.S.-Turkish relations, the years of the embargo (1975-1978), this policy of evenhandedness created actual disparity.

Indeed, during this specific period the American policy makers used various "alternatives" for the application of their policy. For example, for the Military Aid Program (MAP) of 1976, a memorandum was sent to Secretary of State Kissinger recommending an "alternative approach" since "hopes for a Turkey MAP program are dim." The recommended alternatives were to "propose a compromise on the Turk aid ban that would lift the ban only on cash and credit sales" and "put Greece and Turkey on a common basis by dropping further requests for grant MAP for Turkey and not seeking to resume MAP for Greece." However, "If Congress fails to approve Turkey MAP, *we have recommended against Greece*" since, "In the absence of MAP for Turkey, a Greek MAP program would disrupt the policy of evenhandedness we have pursued in the Aegean."<sup>192</sup> [Emphasis added].

Therefore, the U.S. policy makers by overcoming the decisions of other U.S. officials (the U.S. Congress in our case) promoted by this peculiar, to our opinion, way

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<sup>192</sup> Quoted from Declassified Document Memo, From: Clinton E. Cranger, To: Secretary Kissinger, National Security Council. SECRET. Issue date: 2 July 1975. Date declassified: 7 March 1997. [CD-ROM Id: 1997070102191] Fiche#: 1997-177, pp. 6-7.

the evenhandedness and demonstrated their impartial role. However, to our view, a distinction between the victim and the persecutor is considered of utmost importance, even under the weight of cold policy decisions.

Moreover, the same asymmetry applies to the current situation. The identical Dulles letters described previously and their effect is analogous with the identical White House messages sent to Greece and Turkey during the Imia (Kardak) crisis in 1996.

To conclude, “American power is intrinsic and safe, more so now than ever. The success, liberty, and happiness of Americans are not assured by American supremacy but by the creation of a peaceful, and powerful, community of democracies.”<sup>193</sup>

*It has been of the world's history hitherto that might makes right.*

*It is for us and for our time to reverse the maxim.*

—Abraham Lincoln

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<sup>193</sup> Quoted from David Gompert, “Right Makes Might: Freedom and Power in the Information Age,” *Institute for National Strategic Studies, MacNair Paper 59*, May 1998

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